# DELIVERANCE FROM THE CROSS

MUHAMMAD
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To Halimah
From Rasheedah
September, 1983

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# FOREWORD

The birth, ministry, death, resuscitation, ascension, and second coming of Jesus are all shrouded in a mystery that has extended over a period of close upon two thousand years.

The Jews of his time, with a few exceptions, questioned the legitimacy of his birth and rejected him as an impostor. They believed that they had compassed his death upon the cross and that this made him accursed and set a seal on his falsehood. In consequence, they are still awaiting the advent of the Messiah.

The position of the orthodox church, developed over a period, came to be that Jesus was not only the son of God, in the sense of that Biblical idiom, but was God, the Son, that is to say, the second person of the trinity, and that he suffered death upon the cross to atone for the sins of mankind and thus became the only true source of human salvation. They believe that he rose up from the dead on the third day after his crucifixion and went about in his physical body and met some of his disciples and then ascended to heaven in the same physical body. They further believe that he sits on the right hand of God and will descend to earth in the latter days and judge mankind.

The Muslims believe, in accordance with the Holy Quran, that Jesus was born without a father and was a prophet in Israel. He was put upon the cross but was taken down before life became extinct and was ministered unto and was resuscitated and met his disciples and thereafter departed from Judaea to carry his message to the lost tribes of Israel and

eventually died at a good old age on a pleasent plateau with springs of running water (23:51). They believe in his second advent in the latter days, as prophecied by the Holy Prophet, when his function would be to wipe out evil, to restore virtue, to revive Islam and refute the fiction of the death of Jesus upon the cross.

Beginning with the last decade of the nineteenth century of the Christian era, evidence has become progressively available which throws light upon several aspects of the mystery of Jesus, on the basis of which we can proceed with a certain degree of assurance to put these aspects in proper perspective. This book is the result of such an effort. We venture the hope that it might stimulate the thinking of some of those seekers after truth who attach value to the eternal verities and might prove helpful to them in their search.

All references, unless otherwise specified, are to the Holy Quran.

*London, March* 1978 *Zafrulla Khan*

# I

# BIRTH

The Jews rejected Jesus principally because they held that his birth was not legitimate. The Quran recites this calumny of the Jews among their major sins, as is said: And their uttering against Mary a grievous calumny (4:157). They upbraided her: Mary, thou hast perpetrated an abominable thing. . . . Thy father was not a wicked man, nor was thy mother an unchaste woman (19:28–29).

The gospel account is that an angel appeared to Mary and conveyed to her the glad tidings that she would bear a son. It is said in Luke:

The angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, to a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David, and the virgin's name was Mary. And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: Blessed art thou among women. And when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be, and the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: For thou hast found favour with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the son of the Highest: And the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end. Then said Mary unto the angel, how shall this be, seeing I know not a man? And the angel answered and said unto her, the Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: Therefore also that holy

thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the son of God (Luke 1:26–35).

The Quran confirms that Jesus was born of Mary without a father, according to the good news that had been conveyed to her by the angel under the command of God, as is said:

Call to mind when the angels said to Mary: God has exalted thee and purified thee and chosen thee from among all the women of thy time. Mary, be obedient to thy Lord and prostrate thyself before Him and worship Him alone with single-minded devotion along with those who worship . . . God, through His Word gives thee glad tidings of a son named the Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary, honoured in this world and the next, and of those who are granted nearness to God. He shall admonish people in his early years and also in his ripe years, and he shall be of the righteous. Mary said: Lord, how shall I have a son, when no man has touched me? He answered: 'Such is the power of God, He creates what He pleases. When He decrees a thing, He says to it: Be; and it is. He will teach him the Book, and the Wisdom, and the Torah, and the Gospel, and will make him a Messenger to the children of Israel' (3: 43–4, 46–8).

The Quran supplements that which is stated in Luke with:

Recite the account of Mary according to this Book, when she withdrew from her people to a place towards the east and screened herself off from them. Then We sent Our angel to her and he appeared to her in the form of a well proportioned man. On perceiving him she exclaimed: I seek refuge with the Gracious One, from thee if thou art at all righteous. The angel reassured her: I am but a messenger from thy Lord, that I may give thee tidings of a righteous son. She marvelled: How shall it be that I shall have a son seeing that no man has touched me and I have not been unchaste? The angel said: So it is, but thy Lord sayeth: It is easy for Me. It is so ordained that We may make him a sign unto the people and a source of Our mercy. It has been so decreed (19: 17–22).

So she conceived him and withdrew with him to a remote place. When her time came the pains of child-birth drove her to the trunk of a palm tree. Realising her condition, she cried out: Would that I had died before this and had been quite forgotten. The voice of the angel reached her from below: Grieve not; for thy Lord has provided a rivulet below thee wherein thou mayest wash thyself and the child. Then take hold of the branch of the palm tree and shake it; it will shed fresh ripe dates upon thee. Thus eat and drink and be at rest. Shouldst thou see anyone approaching, call out: I have vowed a fast to the Gracious One, and will, therefore, hold no converse with any person today (19: 23–7).

Thus, so far as the event of the birth itself is concerned, the Gospel and the Quran are in accord that the birth of Jesus was a holy event brought about through divine decree and designed as a mercy and a blessing. There are also striking similarities on certain matters of detail. For instance, the Biblical account says that the angel greeted Mary with: 'Hail, thou art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women'; and the Quran affirms that the angel said to Mary: 'God has exalted thee and purified thee and chosen thee from among all the women of thy time'. Then the Gospel account sets forth the natural reaction of Mary to the tidings that the angel conveyed to her: 'How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?' While according to the Quran, Mary said: 'Lord, how shall I have a son, when no man has touched me?' The response in the Gospel is: 'With God nothing shall be impossible' (Luke 1:37); and the response in the Quran is: 'So it is, but thy Lord sayeth: It is easy for Me. Such is the power of God, He creates what He pleases.'

The Gospel affirms that the child whose birth is prophecied would be given the throne of his father David and shall reign

over the house of Jacob for ever; and the Quran affirms that God will teach him the Book, and the Wisdom, and the Torah, and the Gospel, and will make him a Messenger to the Children of Israel. Thus both accounts confirm the scope of his ministry to the house of Jacob, though the Biblical account adds that he shall be called the son of the Highest and the son of God. There is no such indication in the Quran. This, however, is only an apparent discrepancy, as will appear later.

It is true that the manner of birth of Jesus was unusual and though miraculous in the sense that it was meant as a divine sign, it was not supernatural, only exceptional. It has now been established, by the observation and experience of eminent gynaecologists, that a birth without a father is possible and that there have been cases in recent times where this has in fact happened.

What is the significance of the birth of Jesus without a father? The Bani Israel were the chosen people of God. God had assured them that if they would obey His voice and keep His covenant they would be a peculiar treasure unto Him above all people and would be unto Him a kingdom of priests and an holy nation (Exodus 19:4–5).

This is confirmed by the Quran which states: 'Children of Israel, call to mind My favour which I bestowed upon you and that I exalted you above all the peoples of the time' (2:48); and: 'Children of Israel, call to mind My favour which I bestowed upon you and fulfil the covenant that you made with Me, I shall fulfil the covenant I made with you, and fear Me alone' (2:41). But the moment Moses departed from them for a while they took to the worship of the calf. The Bible presents a lurid picture of the transgressions of the Bani Israel, their repeated breaches of the convenant that they had made with God and their frequent fallings from

grace. Each time God forgave them and admonished them to adhere to the straight path and to be grateful to Him for all the bounties that He had bestowed upon them. Moses himself had reminded them:

> Call to mind God's favour upon you when He delivered you from the people of Pharaoh, who afflicted you with grievous torment, slaying your male children and sparing your female ones; and therein was a great trial for you from your Lord. Call to mind also when your Lord declared: If you will use My bounties beneficently, I will surely multiply them unto you, but if you misuse them, My punishment is severe indeed (14:7–8).

There was a whole succession of prophets raised among them, but they proved a stiff-necked people who repeatedly drew upon themselves God's wrath for their disobedience and their persecution of the prophets who were sent to them. Some of their major offences are mentioned in the Quran. For instance, their breaking of their covenant, transgressing the Sabbath, rejecting the Signs of God, seeking to slay the prophets, uttering a grievous calumny against Mary, taking interest, devouring people's wealth wrongly, etc. (4:155–65).

By the time of the birth of Jesus they had been so bereft of spirituality that there was no one among them who was worthy, in divine estimation, of begetting the Messiah, by believing in whom the Bani Israel could have made their peace with God and could thus have redeemed themselves. They were warned that if they rejected him the Kingdom of God would be taken from them and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof (Matt. 21:43). This meant that prophethood would be transferred from the house of Israel to another people.

This was conveyed to them dramatically by Jesus through

a parable to the following effect: 'A certain man planted a vineyard and let it forth to husbandmen, and went into a far country for a long time and at the season he sent a servant to the husbandmen, that they should give him of the fruits of the vineyard: but the husbandmen beat him and sent him away empty. And again he sent another servant: and they beat him also, and entreated him shamefully, and sent him away empty. And again he sent a third: and they wounded him also, and cast him out. Then said the lord of the vineyard, what shall I do? I will send my beloved son: it may be they will reverence him when they see him. But when the husbandmen saw him, they reasoned among themselves, saying, This is the heir. Come, let us kill him, that the inheritance may be ours. So they cast him out of the vineyard and killed him. What, therefore, shall the lord of the vineyard do unto them? He shall come and destroy these husbandmen and shall give the vineyard to others. And when they heard it, they said, God forbid' (Luke 20:19–16; Matt. 21:32–41; Mark 12:1–9).

Those before whom Jesus had set forth this parable clearly grasped the warning of Jesus that if they rejected him, the bounty of prophethood would be withdrawn from them and would be transferred to another people, but they did not believe that this would happen, so their response was, God forbid. However Jesus did not leave the matter there; he went on to remind them:

> What is this then that is written, the stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner? Whosoever shall fall upon that stone shall be broken; but on whosoever it shall fall, it shall grind him to powder (Luke 20:17–18; Matt. 21:42–4; Mark 12:10–11).

Thus to their reaction to the parable of the defaulting

husbandmen Jesus responded by reminding them that scripture had already prophecied that the corner stone of the edifice of phophethood, meaning the Chief of the Prophets, would be raised from among the children of Ishmael who were despised and rejected by the Bani Israel. Jesus also prophesied the triumph of that Prophet over his enemies.

But the Bani Israel not only rejected Jesus, they sought to crucify him and thus they sealed their own doom. The door of prophethood, which is the greatest bounty bestowed upon mankind by God, was closed to them and thus after Jesus there has been no prophet among the Bani Israel.

The manner of the birth of Jesus was a divine signal that prophethood was about to be transferred from the house of Jacob to the house of Ishmael.

# 2

# MINISTRY

Jesus was the last prophet in Israel. He was called the son of God, an expression that was in common use in scripture but was always employed metaphorically and in no single instance did it connote God. Nowhere in the Gospels or the Epistles is it said that Jesus referred to himself as God or implied that he was God. The expression, Lord, was applied to him but there is no evidence that those who made use of this expression with reference to him believed, or meant to convey, that he was God. It was used as a synonym for master.

It was long after his time that the expression son of God was transmuted into God, the Son, meaning thereby that Jesus was the second person in the Trinity. The entire concept of the Trinity was foreign to the thinking of Jesus. He always referred to himself as having been *sent* by God, meaning that he was a divine messenger. For instance:

This is life eternal, that they might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent (John 17:3).

I can of mine own self do nothing, as I hear I judge and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me (John 5:30).

I have greater witness than that of John, for the works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me (John 5:36).

And the Father himself, which hath sent me, hath borne witness of me (John 5:37).

Ye have not His word abiding in you: for whom He hath sent, him ye believe not (John 5:39).

He that sent me is true (John 8:26).

Jesus said unto them, If God were your Father, ye would love me; for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I myself, but He sent me (John 8:42).

They have believed that Thou didst send me (John 17:8).

For I came down from heaven not to do mine own will, but the will of Him that sent me. And this is the Father's will which hath sent me . . . And this is the will of Him that sent me . . . (John 6:38–40).

It is clear, therefore, that Jesus consistently put himself forward as one who had been sent by God, that is to say, as a messenger of God. In fact, his function as a messenger of God was defined even before his birth by divine direction as set out both in the Gospel and in the Quran. The angel that appeared to Mary and told her that she would bear a son whom she should name Jesus also informed her that God would give him the throne of his father David, and he shall reign over the house of Jacob (Luke 1:32–3). The Quran affirms that Mary was told that God would teach Jesus the Book and the Wisdom and the Torah and the Gospel and would make him a messenger to the children of Israel (3:49–50). It is true that in Luke 1:32, he is called the son of the Highest and in 1:35, the son of God; but these expressions in Biblical idiom do not at all connote Divinity or partnership in Divinity. In Psalms, 82:6 we read: 'I have said, ye are gods; and all of you are the children of the most High.'

In numerous instances the expression son of God is applied to prophets, to the righteous and to believers. The following are only some examples out of many:

Israel is My son, even My first-born (Exodus 4:22).

Also I will make him [David] My first born, higher than the kings of the earth (Psalms 89:27).

He [Solomon] shall be My son, and I will be his father (1 Chron. 22:10).

Now, My son, the Lord be with thee; and prosper thee, and build the house of Lord, thy God, as he has said of thee (1 Chron. 22:11).

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God (Matt. 5:9).

That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven (Matt. 5:45).

But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe in his name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God (John 1:12–13).

For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the spirit of adoption whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together (Romans 8:14–17).

Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God (John 3:1).

More significant than all this is the explanation furnished by Jesus himself, which is as follows:

Then the Jews took up stones again to stone him. Jesus answered them, Many good works have I shewed you from my Father; for which of those works do you stone me? The Jews answered him, saying, For a good work we stone thee not; but for blasphemy; and because that thou, being man, makest thyself God (John 10:31–33).

Now here the crucial question was directly posed to Jesus. Did he claim to be God, the second person in the Trinity, as he subsequently came to be represented? His answer must

be accepted by all those who profess to believe in him and to follow him.

Jesus answered them, Is it not written in your law, I said, ye are gods? If he called them gods, unto whom the word of God came, and the scripture cannot be broken; say ye of him, whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, thou blasphemeth; because I said, I am the son of God (John 10:34–7)?

For-as-much then as we are the offspring of God (Acts 17:29).

This makes it quite clear that the expression son of God when applied to Jesus, by himself or by others, meant no more in his case than it means in its application to others in scripture, of which we have set out several instances above. He was son of God in that sense, but in no wise at all God, the Son, the second person in the Trinity as it is now claimed.

It is contended, however, that in the same context Jesus had also said: I and my Father are one (John 10:30) and; the Father is in me, and I in him (John 10:39); and that these affirmations lend support to the claim made on his behalf that he was not merely the son of God in the Biblical idiom, but had a relationship with God which elevated him to the Godhead and made him a partner and an associate with God on an equal footing. We shall now proceed to show that in the idiom of the Bible the expressions relied upon do not carry the matter any further and do not furnish the least evidence of the divinity of Jesus. For instance:

At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you (John 14:20).

That they all may be one; as Thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: That the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one: and

that the world may know that thou hast sent me and hast loved them as thou hast loved me (John 17:21–3).

He that knoweth not the Son knoweth not the Father which hath sent him (John 5:23).

He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life (John 5:24).

One God and Father of all, who is above all and through all, and in you all (Ephesians 4:6).

The distinction between God and Jesus was well understood among the disciples and the early Christians, as would be appreciated from the following:

For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ, Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh (Phil. 3:3).

But to us there is but one God, the Father, of Whom are all things, and we in Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ by whom are all things, and we by him (1 Cor. 8:6).

Jesus himself brought out the distinction clearly in attributing divinity to God alone, Who was also his God, as for instance: Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God (John 20:17).

Jesus had not the slightest hesitation in affirming the Unity of God. For instance:

One of the scribes came . . . and asked him, which is the first commandment of all? And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear O Israel, the Lord, our God, is One Lord: and thou shalt love the Lord, thy God, with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: This is the first commandment. . . . And the scribe said unto him, Well, Master, thou hast said the truth: for there is One God; and there is none other but He (Mark 12:29–30 & 32).

God alone is immortal: the blessed and only potentate, King of kings, and Lord of lords; Who only hath immortality, dwelling

in the light which no man can approach; Whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting (1 Tim. 6:15–16).

The doctrine of the Trinity necessarily imports the complete equality in all respects of the three persons of the Trinity, for if there were inequality in any respect between them that would mean the superiority of one over the other two or the superiority of two over the third, in which case the one, or the two, that lacked equality could not be God; the one who had superiority over the other two would be God of the universe, including the other two. Even a cursory study of the Gospels and the Epistles reveals that in respect of the attributes of which there is a record the Father is supreme and there is a disclaimer by Jesus of those attributes.

For instance, God alone is the true source of honour, as is said: How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only' (John 5:44)? This finds support in the Quran: 'Whoso seeks honour should realise that all honour belongs to God' (35:11).

All holiness belongs to God alone, as is said: 'And, behold one came and said unto him, Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life? And he said unto him, Why callest thou me good? There is none good but One, that is, God: But if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments' (Matt. 19:16–17).

Jesus disclaimed absolute power. When Zebedee asked him to grant that her two sons may sit, the one on his right hand, and the other on his left hand, in his kingdom, the reply given by him was: 'To sit on my right hand, and on my left is not mine to give, but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of my Father' (Matt. 20:23).

His knowledge was not co-extensive with the knowledge

of God. Concerning the day and hour of his second coming, after setting out certain signs, he said: 'But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father' (Mark 13:32).

The Quran affirms that God's knowledge comprehends all that is in the heavens and in the earth but that man's knowledge is limited to that much which God bestows upon him; 'He knows all that is before them and all that is behind them, and they cannot compass aught of His knowledge, except that which He pleases. His knowledge extends over the heavens and the earth, and the care of them wearies Him not. He is the Most High, the Most Great' (2:256).

Apparently, not only Jesus lacked equality with God he also lacked equality with the third person in the Trinity, the Holy Ghost, as he said: 'Wherefore I say unto you, all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men. And whosever speaketh against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him; but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come' (Matt. 12:31–2).

The Quran lays down that all prayer is to be addressed to God: 'Unto Him is the true prayer. Those on whom they call beside Him, do not respond to them at all' (13:15). Jesus had the habit of prayer. As for instance: 'He withdrew himself into the wilderness and prayed' (Luke 5:16). 'He took Peter and John and James, and went up into a mountain to pray' (Luke 9:28). 'And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive' (Matt. 21:22). 'It came to pass, that, as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray as John also taught his disciples, and he said unto them,

when ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy name . . .' (Luke 11:1–2).

Thus quite rightly all his supplications and those of his disciples were addressed to God. Obviously, therefore, there was not equality between the supplicant and Him to Whom supplication was addressed. God had the power to respond to supplication and to grant it. Quite obviously Jesus lacked such power, for indeed if he had possessed that power his supplicating God would have been meaningless. Had he been the second person in the Trinity, and, therefore, God, he would have been in no need of supplication, as he would have had the power to do all that he wished. This is well illustrated in his repeated supplications in the garden of Gethsemane, when he fell on his face, and prayed, saying, 'O my Father if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt' (Matt. 26:39). To the particular significance of this supplication we shall advert later. Our purpose here is to demonstrate the relationship between Jesus and God which was that between a righteous servant and his gracious Master. Nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt; is a clear affirmation of the supremacy of the Divine will over the will of Jesus which was subordinate to the will of God. As he himself affirmed, he had been sent not to do his own will but to do God's will (John 6:38); which is an exact description of the relationship between God and a Prophet.

As a contrast, there is no mention of the Father ever supplicating the Son, which is clear proof that the Father is supreme and the son is subordinate to Him, as a servant is subordinate to his master.

Assuming that there had been complete equality between the three persons of the Trinity in every respect, status, knowledge, power and all the other attributes of the Divine,

this would only have led to confusion and conflict of the type of which we read in the mythologies of certain creeds, for the situation would present an insoluble dilemma. If one of them had authority to control the others, that would mean the subordination of the others to him, and thus equality would be negated. If there were no control there would be conflict. If there were complete identity of wills between all three and of everything else, there would be redundance. As the Quran has said: If there had been in the heavens and the earth other gods beside God then surely both would have gone to ruin. Then glorified be God, the Lord of the Throne, above that which they ascribe to Him. He cannot be questioned concerning what He does, but they will be questioned (21:23–4).

Jesus called the attention of his opponents to the fact that Moses had prophecied about his coming. He said: 'For had ye believed Moses ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me. But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?' (John 5:46–7).

It is claimed that there are several prophecies in the Torah and other books of the Bible concerning the advent of Jesus, and that the Jews were awaiting the advent of the Messiah when Jesus began his ministry. It is those prophecies to which Jesus was seeking to draw their attention when he referred to the writings of Moses. What is significant for our present purpose is that all those prophecies had reference to the advent of a prophet and not to the advent of God in the capacity of the second person of the Trinity.

The truth of the matter clearly is that Jesus was the last prophet in Israel, a believer in Moses and all the prophets of Israel who followed after Moses. He was bound by the Mosaic law and adhered to it. It is true that he often set forth its true import in contrast with its letter, but that was the

exercise of his prophetic function. He did not mean, and had no authority, to abrogate the Mosaic law or any part of it. This he made quite clear in his emphatic declaration:

Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the Kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 5:17–19).

That is why he told the one who had asked what good thing should he do, that he may have eternal life, to keep the commandments; by which he clearly meant the commandments of the Mosaic law.

His ministry as a prophet was confined to the Bani Israel. He was the heir to the throne of David and was to reign over the house of Jacob (Luke 1:32–3). His own conception of the character of his ministry was manifested clearly in the following incident:

Behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts and cried unto him, saying, Have mercy on me, O lord, thou son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil. But he answered her not a word, and his disciples came and besought him, saying, send her away; for she crieth after us. But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Then came she and worshipped him, saying, Lord, help me. But he answered and said, It is not meet to take the children's bread and to cast it to dogs. And she said, Truth, Lord: Yet the dogs eat out of the crumbs which fall from their master's table. Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour (Matt. 15:22–8).

This account sets forth clearly and positively that Jesus was a Messenger of God sent unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel and that the scope of his ministry did not extend beyond the children of Israel. The woman of Canaan is said to have worshipped him at one stage, but her worship amounted to no more than an entreaty for help, so that the expression worshipped has been used instead of beseeched. The verse could well have run: Then came she and prayed him to help her. Be that as it may, the manifestation on her part of extreme reverence for Jesus did not invest Jesus with divinity, and his response to her entreaty was even more emphatic than his first response, exhibiting an extreme degree of contempt for the Gentiles. He did not consider it fitting to take the children's bread, and cast it to dogs. The contempt apart, it leaves no room for speculating that his mission as a Messenger could have included within its scope anyone outside the house of Israel. His yielding to her entreaties in the end was no indication that he had misconceived the scope of his mission and that now he had a better understanding of its extent. It meant only that he had been moved to compassion by the depth and sincerity of her faith in him. His mission was a beneficent one, and even if a non-Israeli believed in him sincerely it would do him no harm, and nothing but good could proceed from it.

It is said that on another occasion he had exhorted his disciples to carry his message into all the towns and villages and to all the people, but there is nothing to indicate that by all the towns and villages and all the people he meant anything more than all the towns and villages of the Bani Israel and the whole of the Jewish people.

He clearly directed his disciples to that effect, as would appear from: These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into

any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel (Matt. 10:5–6).

Thus, the concept of Trinity finds no support from anything that Jesus is reported to have said. It is a concept which bewilders reason, offends conscience, and affronts Divine Majesty. It is utterly inconsistent with the concept of the Godhead.

A body of distinguished Anglican theologians have described it as a myth, meaning,

> a story which is told but which is not literally true or an idea or an image which is applied to someone or something but which does not literally apply, but which invites a particular attribute in its hearers . . . that Jesus was God, the Son Incarnate, is not literally true, since it has no literal meaning, but it is an application to Jesus of a mythical concept whose function is analogous to that of the notion of divine sonship ascribed in the ancient world to a king.[1]

The writers of this book are convinced that another major theological development is called for in this last part of the twentieth century. The need arises from growing knowledge of Christian origins, and involves a recognition that Jesus was (as he is presented in Acts 2:22) 'a man approved by God' for a special role within the divine purpose, and that the later conception of him as God Incarnate, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, living a human life, is a mythological or poetic way of expressing his significance for us. This recognition is called for in the interests of truth; but it also has increasingly important practical implication for our relationship to the peoples of the other great world religions.[2]

God is not subject to the contingencies of birth and death. He is Ever-living and neither begets, nor is begotten. The

1. *The Myth of God Incarnate*, Preface, p. ix.

2. ibid, p. 178.

Quran sets forth a true concept of Him which does not in any way diminish, confine, or limit Him. For instance:

He is God, the Single; God, the Self-Existing and Besought of all. He begets not, nor is He begotten; and there is none like unto Him (112:2–5).

Put my trust in the One Who is Ever-living and is the source of life, Who dies not, and glorify Him with His praise (25:59).

The Quran utterly and emphatically rejects the concept of the Trinity. For instance:

They allege: The Gracious One has taken unto Himself a son. Assuredly, you have uttered a monstrous thing! The heavens might well nigh burst thereat, and the earth cleave asunder, and the mountains fall down in pieces, because they ascribe a son to the Gracious One; whereas it becomes not the Gracious One to take unto Himself a son. There is no one in the heavens and the earth but he shall come to the Gracious One as a bondman (19:89–94).

All praise belongs to God, Who has sent down the Book to His servant, free from all distortion, full of truth and guidance, that it may give warning of a grievous chastisement proceeding from Him, and that it may give the believers who work righteousness the glad tidings that they shall have a good reward which they shall enjoy forever. And that it may warn those who say: God has taken unto Himself a son. They have no knowledge whatever concerning it, nor had their fathers. Grievous is the assertion that they make. They only utter a falsehood (18:2–6).

We sent no Messenger before thee but We directed him: There is no God but I; so worship Me alone. But they say: The Gracious One has taken to Himself a son. Holy is He. Those whom they so designate are only His honoured servants. They utter not a word more than He directs, and they only carry out His commands. He knows what lies ahead of them and what is left behind them, and they intercede not except only he whose intercession He permits, and they tremble with fear of Him. Whosoever of them

should say: I am a god beside Him; We shall requite him with hell. Thus do We requite the wrongdoers (21: 26–30).

Keep in mind, when God will ask Jesus, son of Mary: Didst thou say to the people: Take me and my mother for two gods beside Allah? And he will answer: Holy art Thou. It behoves me not to have said that to which I have no right. Had I said it, Thou wouldst surely have known it. Thou knowest what is in my mind, and I know not what is in Thy mind. It is only Thou Who possessest full knowledge of all that is hidden. I said naught to them except that which Thou didst command me, that is: Worship God, my Lord and your Lord. I watched over them as long as I was present among them, but since Thou didst cause me to die, Thou hast been the One to watch over them. Indeed Thou dost watch over all things. If Thou decide to punish them they are Thy servants; and if Thou forgive them, then surely Thou art the Mighty, the Wise (5:117–19).

People of the Book! exceed not the bounds in the matter of your religion, and say not of God anything but the truth. Indeed, the Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary, was but a Messenger of God and the fulfilment of glad tidings which He conveyed to Mary and a mercy from Him. So believe in God and His Messengers and say not: There are three gods. Desist, it will be the better for you. Indeed, God is the only One God. His Holiness brooks not that He should have a son. To Him belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth. Sufficient is God as a Guardian. Surely, the Messiah would never disdain to be accounted a servant of God, nor would the angels who are close to God. Those who disdain to worship Him and consider themselves above it will He gather all together before Himself (4:172–3).

Those certainly are disbelievers who say: God is none but the Messiah, son of Mary; whereas the Messiah himself taught: Children of Israel, worship God Who is my Lord and your Lord. Surely God has forbidden heaven to him who associates partners with God, and the Fire will be his resort. The wrongdoers shall have no helpers. Those certainly are disbelievers who say: God is the third of three. There is no one worthy of worship but the

One God. If they desist not from that which they say, a grievous chastisement shall surely afflict those of them that disbelieve. Will they not then turn to God and beg His forgiveness, seeing that God is Most Forgiving, Ever Merciful (5:73–5).

The Messiah, son of Mary, was only a Messenger; Many Messengers have passed away before him. His mother was a paragon of truth and they both were in need of and ate food. Observe how We explain the Signs for their benefit, then observe how they are led away. Ask them: Do you worship beside God that which has no power to do you harm or good? It is God Who is All-Hearing, All-Knowing. Admonish them: People of the Book, exceed not the bounds in the matter of your religion unjustly, nor follow the vain desires of a people who themselves went astray before and caused many others to go astray, and who strayed away from the right path (5:76–8).

The subject of God and His attributes, through which alone a true concept of Him may be formed, is vast and limitless. The Quran sets forth a wealth of instruction concerning divine attributes and their operation. It is not necessary for our present purpose to embark upon a detailed discussion of the subject. By way of illustration, however, attention might be drawn to the following passage which should be studied and pondered with great care:

God is He besides Whom there is no god, the Sovereign, the Most Holy, the source of Peace, the Bestower of Security, the Protector, the Mighty, the Subduer, the Exalted. Holy is God, far above that which they associate with Him. He is God, the Creator, the Maker, the Fashioner; His are the most beautiful names. All that is in the heavens and the earth glorifies Him. He is the Mighty, the Wise (59:23–5).

Man is desirous of righteous progeny to help him in his old age, to carry on his name and the family after his death, and to bring him posthumous honour. God is Ever-living,

Self-subsisting and Self-sustaining. All that is in heaven and earth belongs to Him, obeys Him and glorifies Him. What need has He of a son? What can a son do for Him that He cannot do Himself? To attribute a son to Him, as a partner in the Godhead, would be to offer the gravest affront to Him.

# 3

# DEATH

The Jews claimed that they had compassed the death of Jesus on the cross and that, therefore, he had become accursed in accordance with the pronouncement contained in Deut. 21:23, and thus could not be a true prophet.

The Christians affirm that though Jesus had died on the cross, he rose from the dead on the third day, met his disciples on certain occasions and was then received into heaven.

The Quran does not accept either claim. The death of Jesus, whether upon the cross, or later in the natural course, has continued to be a mystery and a subject of controversy over the centuries. The truth of the matter is of fundamental importance with regard to the beliefs and doctrines of the Jews, the Christians, and the Muslims. A study of the question and of the evidence available must be carried out with the utmost care and in a reverent spirit.

Jesus had in a manner made a prophecy which is very apposite to the problem. We read:

> Then certain of the scribes and of the Pharisees answered, saying, Master, we would see a sign from thee. But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the Prophet Jonas: For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth (Matt. 12:38–40).
>
> And when the people were gathered thick together, he began to say, This is an evil generation: They seek a sign; and there

shall no sign be given it, but the sign of Jonas, the Prophet. For as Jonas was a sign unto the Ninevites, so shall also the son of man be to this generation (Luke 11:29–30).

Thus, the sign that was predicted by Jesus was that as the Prophet Jonas was in the belly of the whale for a certain period, so shall the son of man be in the heart of the earth for a period. The essence of the sign was not the period. It will be noted that the version given in Luke makes no mention of the period but only of the sign of Jonas.

What was the sign of the Prophet Jonas? It was that he entered the belly of the whale alive, and remained therein alive, and came out thereof alive. Thus, Jesus prophecied that he would enter the heart of the earth alive, would remain there alive and would come out thereof alive. This meant that the design of his enemies would be frustrated and that they would not succeed in putting him to death on the cross. This is the key to the complicated and poignant drama of the crucifixion.

This is how the account of it opens:

Then cometh Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsemane and saith unto the disciples, sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder. And he took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be sorrowful and very heavy. Then saith he unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: Tarry he here, and watch with me. And he went a little further, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: Nevertheless not as I will, but as Thou wilt. And he cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, What, could ye not watch with me one hour? Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. He went away again the second time and prayed, saying, O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, Thy will be

done. And he came and found them asleep again: for their eyes were heavy. And he left them and went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words (Matt. 26:36–44).

Quite understandably Jesus, a sincere servant of God and a true prophet, was much agitated over the prospect of being condemned to death by crucifixion, for apart from the suffering involved, such a denouement would forever become a barrier to the Jews believing in him as the Messiah, as they would deem his death accursed. Therefore, he supplicated repeatedly in agony that he might be delivered from death on the cross. And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: 'And his sweat was, as it were, great drops of blood falling down to the ground' (Luke 22:44). As a true prophet, he realised that his duty was to approach God humbly for deliverance, as for instance, the Holy Prophet supplicated humbly and passionately before the Battle of Badar. Both hoped and believed that their respective prayers would be accepted, yet their souls were in travail before the awful majesty of God Who alone had full knowledge of His Own designs. That is why Jesus added to his supplication: Nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt. He was fully conscious that he had to conform to and carry out the divine will, whatever it might be. Incidentally, this attitude confirms that his relationship with God was that of a prophet and not that of an equal partner in the Godhead.

He had full confidence that his prayer would be accepted, as he had himself told his disciples:

> And all things, whatsoever, ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive (Matt. 21:22).
>
> And I knew that thou hearest me always: but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me (John 11:42).
>
> Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers

and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared (Heb. 5:7).

Indeed his prayer was accepted: 'and there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him' (Luke 22:43). Thus, Jesus knew that he would be delivered from death upon the cross, though he did not know how it would come about. His enemies had devised a plan for his ruin and God devised His plan for his deliverance, as is said in the Quran:

> The enemies of Jesus devised their plans and God devised His plan; God is the Best of planners. God reassured Jesus: I shall cause thee to die a natural death, and shall exalt thee to Myself, and shall clear thee from the calumnies of those who disbelieve, and shall place those who follow thee above those who disbelieve, until the Day of Judgment; then to Me shall be your return and I will judge between you concerning that wherein you differ (3:55–6).

The plan of God was bound to be carried out successfully, it could not be frustrated.

Soon after his supplications in the garden of Gethsemane Jesus was apprehended, whereupon one of them which were with Jesus stretched out his hand, and drew his sword, and struck a servant of the high priest and smote off his ear, on which Jesus rebuked him and said:

> Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and He shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be (Matt. 26:51–4).

All this makes it clear that Jesus supplicated most earnestly to be delivered from death upon the cross and was reassured in answer to his supplications that God would deliver him

from such a death. A question, however, arises that calls for an answer from those who believe that Jesus was a partner in the Godhead and had appeared in human form to lay down his life on the cross so as to become an atonement for the sins of mankind. If that were so, his death upon the cross would be the fulfilment of the very purpose of his coming and he would welcome its approach rather than seek to be delivered from it. Indeed, as a partner in the Godhead, he was in no need of any supplication but if, nevertheless, he did supplicate his supplication would be acted upon, he would be delivered from death upon the cross and would thus himself frustrate the very purpose of his coming. His supplications in the garden of Gethsemane, therefore, furnish a complete refutation of the fiction that he was a partner in the Godhead and had come into the world to become an atonement for the sins of mankind.

Having been apprehended, they that had laid hold on Jesus led him away to Caiaphas, the high priest, where the scribes and elders were assembled. He was questioned by the high priest and at the end of the interrogation the high priest rent his clothes, saying,

He hath spoken blasphemy; what further need have we of witnesses? behold, now ye have heard his blasphemy. What think ye? They answered and said, he is guilty of death (Matt. 26:65–6). When they had bound him, they led him away and delivered him to Pontius Pilate the governor (Matt. 27:2).

When Pilate was set down on the judgment seat, his wife sent unto him, saying, have thou nothing to do with that just man: for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him (Matt. 27:19).

This was clearly divine intervention on behalf of Jesus and the first step in the divine plan to deliver him from death upon the cross. There is no instance in the history of religion

where divine intervention, even through a dream, has ever been frustrated of its purpose. That the dream of Pilate's wife was a true one and was inspired by God is clear from the fact that she was informed that Jesus was a just man, that is to say, he was righteous.

That the purpose of such a dream cannot be frustrated had already been manifested through a dream which was aimed at securing the safety of Jesus when he was still a baby.

Behold, the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word: for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him. When he arose, he took the young child and his mother by night, and departed into Egypt: and was there until the death of Herod (Matt. 2:13–15). But when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeareth in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and go into the land of Israel: for they are dead which sought the young child's life. And he arose, and took the young child and his mother, and came into the land of Israel (Matt. 2:19–21).

This meant that no harm could have come to the child in Egypt as he would be under divine protection. In the same way, the purpose of the dream seen by Pilate's wife was to persuade Pilate to adopt a favourable attitude towards Jesus whereby the divine purpose for his deliverance from death upon the cross might be facilitated and carried into effect. The attitude of Pilate was affected in accordance with the divine intent, as is said: 'And from thenceforth Pilate sought to release him' (John 19:12).

Pilate questioned Jesus but found nothing amiss with him. It was the time of the feast of the Passover and at that feast the Governor was to release unto the people a prisoner,

whom they would. And they had then a notable prisoner called Barabbas.

Therefore, when they were gathered together, Pilate said unto them, Whom will ye that I release unto you? Barabbas, or Jesus, which is called Christ? For he knew that for envy they had delivered him (Matt. 27:15:18). But the Chief priests and the elders persuaded the multitude that they should ask for Barabbas, and destroy Jesus. The Governor answered and said unto them, Whether of the twain will ye that I release unto you? They said, Barabbas. Pilate saith unto them, What shall I do then with Jesus, which is called Christ? They all say unto him, Let him be crucified. And the Governor said, Why, what evil hath he done? But they cried out the more, saying, Let him be crucified. When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but that rather a tumult was made, he took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person: see ye to it. Then answered all the people and said, His blood be on us, and on our children (Matt. 27:20–5).

Thus, Jesus was condemned to be crucified and was taken to Golgotha, the place of execution. The multitude went on mocking him and reviling him from the sixth hour to the ninth hour. About the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? That is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? (Matt. 27:47). Apparently, this exclamation was wrenched from him by the perplexity from which he began to suffer that so far as he could see there was no way of deliverance left open for him, and yet God had promised him deliverance and he wondered whether anything that he had done or had left undone since the divine promise had served to cause offence to God. Stretched, as he was, on the cross he might have felt that the strain of the proceedings of the day and the ill treatment that he had undergone at the hands of the multitude were about

to overcome his physical senses. He could not, at that moment, have imagined that his loss of consciousness and his perception of his approaching end were the very means that God in His Wisdom, had designed for his deliverance.

After this, Jesus, knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scriptures might be fulfilled saith, I thirst. Now there was set a vessel full of vinegar: and they filled a spunge with vinegar, and put it upon hyssop, and put it to his mouth. When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost (John 19:28–30).

It is noteworthy that all four Evangelists use the same expression with regard to the termination of the tragedy upon the cross. It is not said that Jesus died, but that he yielded or gave up the ghost.

Jesus cried with a loud voice, and gave up the ghost (Mark 15:37). And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost (Luke 23:46). When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost (John 19:30).

Giving up the ghost has been understood as meaning that Jesus had died, but in view of scientific evidence that has recently come to light this expression acquires a different connotation altogether, to which we shall presently advert.

Incidentally, Jesus commending his spirit into the hands of the Father as mentioned in Luke, is consistent with his righteousness as a prophet, but is not consistent with his alleged partnership in the Godhead.

The Gospel account continues:

The Jews, therefore, because it was the preparation that the bodies should not remain upon the cross on the Sabbath day (for

that sabbath day was an high day), besought Pilate that their legs might be broken and that they might be taken away. Two thieves had also been nailed to the cross at the same time with Jesus. Then came the soldiers, and broke the legs of the first and of the other which was crucified with him. But when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they broke not his legs: but one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came thereout blood and water (John 19:31–4),

After this Joseph of Arimathaea, being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews, besought Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus, and though Pilate marvelled if Jesus were already dead: being satisfied on the point by the statement of the centurion (Mark 15:44–5) readily gave his leave. And there came also Nicodemus, which at the first came to Jesus by night, and brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about an hundred pound weight. Then took they the body of Jesus, and wound it in linen clothes with the spices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury. Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden; and in the garden a new sepulchre, wherein was never a man yet laid. There laid they Jesus therefore because of the Jews' preparation day; for the sepulchre was nigh at hand (John 19:38–42).

In this closing scene, the plan of God: 'The enemies of Jesus devised their plans and God devised His plan; God is the Best of planners' (3:55); can be clearly discerned. Jesus perceived that his end was approaching and cried out: 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' Immediately thereupon a sponge filled with vinegar was put up to him to drink. This, instead of affording him any relief, caused him to be suffocated and he cried out: It is finished. By that time it was dark and the order was given to break the legs of those who were hung upon the cross, but when the soldiers came to Jesus, it seemed to them that he was dead already and they did not break his legs, but one of them pierced his side with a spear and forthwith came thereout blood and

water, which was an indication that blood had not stopped circulating. The spear had not touched the heart but had injured the lung. The strain under which Jesus had laboured during the day, his agony upon the cross, his drinking of the vinegar and the thrust of the spear in his side which injured the lung, all combined to bring about a condition in which his breathing stopped but the circulation of the blood continued. To all appearance he had died, but in truth, despite the semblance of death, he was alive. If he had continued in that state for some time, the circulation of blood would also have stopped, but it was God's plan that the process of his resuscitation should now come into operation.

Joseph of Arimathaea and Nicodemus, an expert physician, now came and took charge of the body of Jesus, brought it down from the cross, wrapped him in a linen cloth, which was impregnated with spices, and laid him in a sepulchre which had been recently hewn out of a rock. There can be no doubt that Joseph and Nicodemus must have continued to minister unto Jesus in the strong hope of reviving him as nothing had happened that day which could persuade them to believe that Jesus had truly died. He was a young man of thirty-three, of good physique, enjoying good health right up to the moment of his apprehension and condemnation. It is true that a crown of thorns was placed over his head (Matt. 27:29), which, though irritating and painful and causing him to bleed, could not have brought about his death. He was put upon the cross in the afternoon of Friday and had to be taken down from the cross before sunset, in accordance with the law of Moses, which the Jews were anxious to observe, as their failure to do so would bring upon them God's displeasure. In such circumstances the device adopted of compassing the death of those who were still hanging upon the cross at the approach of sunset was to

break their legs, but the legs of Jesus were not broken, so that when he was taken down from the cross all his limbs were in good condition.

The omission to break the legs of Jesus was obviously a part of the divine plan to rescue Jesus from the accursed death which his enemies were anxious to bring about.

It should also be remembered that though the word burial has been applied to Jesus, there was no actual burial involved. He was placed in a sepulchre which was like a chamber hewn out of the rock (Mark 15:46). The grave in which his body would be buried in case of death was not yet dug. The chamber in which he was placed was wide enough to permit people to enter into and move about in. Thus, nothing whatever had happened from which an inference of death could reasonably be drawn. That is why Pilate, who must have possessed a good deal of knowledge of these things, when told that Jesus had died, marvelled if he were already dead. As, however, he had been favourably inclined towards Jesus throughout, in consequence of the dream of his wife, he professed himself satisfied with the statement of the centurion about the death of Jesus and readily gave the order that the body may be handed over to Joseph of Arimathaea.

This is in exact accord with the affirmation of the Quran on the subject. We have already drawn attention to God's assurance to Jesus, according to the Quran, that he would die a natural death and would be spiritually exalted towards God, that is to say, he would not suffer death upon the cross. But there is a very significant and most emphatic affirmation in the Quran which confirms that which we have just stated: 'And their claiming: We did kill the Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary who claimed to be the Messenger of God, whereas they slew him not, nor did they compass his death upon the cross, but the semblance of death was created for

them. . . . They have no definite knowledge about it, but only follow conjecture; they certainly did not compass his death; indeed, God exalted him to Himself; God is Mighty, Wise' (4:158–9).

Several biographers of Jesus have, in recent years, expressed grave doubts about his death on the cross. According to them all the circumstances surrounding the event of the crucifixion point very strongly to the probability that he escaped such a death. For instance: 'Pilate, then, would have liked to save Jesus. . . . According to a tradition, Jesus found a supporter in the wife of the Procurator himself . . . and the idea that the blood of this beautiful young man was about to be spilt, weighed upon her mind. Certain it is that Jesus found Pilate prepossessed in his favour. The Governor questioned him with kindness, and with the desire to find an excuse for sending him away pardoned.'[1]

Therefore Pilate endeavoured to release him, but the Jews cried out: 'If thou release this man, thou art no friend of Caesar. Whosoever claimeth to be a king denieth the claim of Caesar.' On hearing these words Pilate brought Jesus forth and sat down on the judgment-seat in a place called the Pavement, in Hebrew, Gabbatha. It was the preparation-day of the Passover, and about the sixth hour. And he said to the Jews: Behold your King; but they cried out: Away with him, crucify him. Pilate said to them: Shall I crucify your King? The chief priest replied: We have no King but Caesar. When Pilate perceived that his efforts were of no avail, but on the contrary a tumult was arising, he took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying: I am innocent of the blood of this righteous man; see ye to it. All the people replied: His blood be on us, and on our children. Their clamours, and those of the chief priests prevailed; for

1. Renan, Ernest, *Life of Jesus Christ*, p. 352.

Pilate, desirous to satisfy the multitude, gave sentence that their demand should be executed. So he released to them Barabbas, imprisoned on account of sedition and murder, whom they had desired, and delivered Jesus to them to be crucified.[2]

'Crucifixion was a much more lingering kind of death, and, in its earlier stages, much less excruciating than we are apt to imagine, or than otherwise it would have been. As there was but little loss of blood – the nails that pierced the extremities touching no large blood-vessel and closing the wounds they made – the death which followed resulted from the processes of bodily exhaustion and irritation; and these were so slow that in no case, where the person crucified was in ordinary health and vigour, did they terminate within twelve hours. Almost invariably he survived the first twenty-four hours, lived generally over the second, occassionally even into the fifth or sixth day. The ancient testimonies to this fact are quite explicit, nor are modern ones wanting, although there are but few parts of the world now where cricifixion is practised.'[3]

'A fact of importance to be known, but which has not been sufficiently regarded, is that crucifixion was a very lingering punishment, and proved fatal not so much by loss of blood, since the wounds in the hands and feet did not lacerate any large vessel, and were nearly closed by the nails which produced them, as by the slow process of nervous irritation and exhaustion. This would of course be liable to variety, depending on differences of age, sex, constitution, and other circumstances; but for persons to live two or more days on the cross was a common occurrence, and there are

2. Stroud, William, *On the Physical Cause of the Death of Christ*, p. 39.

3. Hanna, William, *The Life of Christ*, Vol. III, pp. 325–29.

even instances of some who, having been taken down in time and carefully treated, recovered and survived. In many cases death was partly induced by hunger and thirst, the vicissitudes of heat and cold, or the attacks of ravenous birds and beasts; and in others was designedly accelerated by burning, stoning, suffocation, breaking the bones, or piercing the vital organs.'[4]

'But the sudden death of a young and robust man, after a crucifixion of only six hours, was extraordinary, and to them unaccountable'.[5]

'Rationalism has principally its adhesion to the former opinion. The short time that Jesus hung on the cross, together with the otherwise ascertained tardiness of death by crucifixion, and the uncertain nature and effects of the wound from the spear, appeared to render the reality of death doubtful'.[6]

'And yet, as he might be in a syncope – as instances had been known in which men apparently dead had been taken down from the cross and resuscitated – and as the lives of the soldiers would have had to answer for any irregularity, one of the soldiers drove the broad head of his hesta into his side'.[7]

'It is evident, in fact, that doubts arose as to the reality of the death of Jesus. A few hours of suspension on the cross appeared to those accustomed to see crucifixions entirely insufficient to bring about such a result. They cited many instances of persons crucified, who had been removed in time and brought to life again by energetic treatment. Origen,

4. Stroud, William, *On the Physical Cause of the Death of Christ*, p. 55.

5. ibid, p. 133.

6. Straus, Frederick, *Life of Jesus*, p. 750.

7. F. W. Farrar, *The Life of Christ*, Vol. 2, pp. 423–4.

later on, thought it needful to invoke a miracle in order to explain so sudden an end. The same surprise is discovered in the narrative of Mark. Pilate was astonished that Jesus was so soon dead'.[8]

'The ordinary sufferings incidental to crucifixion have been minutely analysed by Richter, the Batholines, Gruners, etc., and are often injudiciously exaggerated, in order to account for the speedy occurrence of the Saviour's death. Richter's explanation of them, as quoted in a note of the Pictorial Bible on John 19:18, is somewhat fanciful and overstrained; yet after all the author acknowledges that they were not calculated to occasion rapid death. . . . Concurring in this opinion, the Editor of the Pictorial Bible observes: "It may be added, that no act in the punishment of crucifixion was in itself mortal, the sufferer died rather from the continuance and increase of the unutterable anguish and exhaustion of his torturing position", and then subjoins the account, already cited from Josephus, of a person known to that historian, who had been crucified apparently for several hours, but having been taken down from the cross, and committed to medical care, survived and recovered. In their laborious attempts to prove that for some time before his death Christ was reduced to a state of extreme debility, the Gruners strongly insist on the accessory or subordinate sufferings of crucifixion, as materially concurring with the principal ones in producing this effect; but on an impartial examination of the matter, their insufficiency is obvious. The scourging, mockery, and labour of carrying the cross were not in themselves more distressing to Jesus than to the malefactors who accompanied him; his fasting and watching had not, at farthest, continued longer than from the preceding evening;

8. Renan, Ernest, *The Life of Jesus*, p. 371.

his removal from place to place was not likely to be attended with much fatigue, since all the places lay within a narrow compass; and heat of climate could not have been very oppressive in Jerusalem at the vernal equinox to a native of the country; more especially when it is considered that, during the last three hours of his life, from the sixth to the ninth hour, the sun was obscured, and that in the much hotter climate of Central Africa crucified persons usually live three days on the cross'.[9]

'Of the death of Christ we would have no evidence – considering how difficult it is to establish the fact of death in many cases – but for the very definite statement found in a single Gospel: For after six hours of crucifixion, the two thieves were found to be still alive. The death of Christ is attributed to his being speared by a soldier, according to the fourth Gospel; but it is remarkable that nothing about this is found in the other three detailed accounts of the crucifixion. If we follow it, it becomes possible to suppose that some friends may have revived him in the tomb and may have facilitated his escape – leaving the cerements folded in the sepulchre – so that a natural interpretation is afforded of his being afterwards seen at dusk on the road to Emmaus and at dusk in a house of Jerusalem, as well as, also at dusk on the shores of the Lake Tiberias somewhat later'.[10]

'There is the theory of those who assert that our Lord did not really die upon the cross, that his supposed death was no more than a temporary swoon, and that his resurrection was simply his return to consciousness. In defence of this are urged – the rapidity of his death, in contrast with the slowness

9. Stroud, William, *On the Physical Cause of the Death of Christ*, pp. 123–4.

10. Forlong, James, *Faiths of Men*, Vol. I, pp. 442–3.

with which death by crucifixion generally took place; the fact that persons are known to have recovered who had been crucified and taken down from the cross as dead; the effect that would be produced by the cool air of the rock-hewn sepulchre, as well as by the aromatic spices with which the body had been prepared for burial – and the conclusion is drawn that apparent restoration of life is thus sufficiently and easily accounted for'.[11]

'In the book of John in the Holy Bible we have one of the interesting facts concerning the crucifixion which appears in the ancient records from which I am quoting, and which incident is overlooked by the most critical of Bible students. It is that although it was a common practice to break the legs of the crucified persons, and to cause these bodies to hang upon the cross for several days so there would be no possibility of the body remaining alive, nevertheless the body of Jesus was taken down without the bones being broken, even though the soldiers broke the bones of the other two criminals that were upon the crosses close by. This was not an oversight on the part of the soldiers by any means, for not only did they fulfil the law by breaking the bones of the criminals but they had been so accustomed to this procedure for many years that we cannot believe that after having performed their duty with the other two they would forget the practice, momentarily, in the case of the third body upon the cross. The ancient records to which I have been referring state that when the soldiers were notified that the body must be taken down immediately because a release had come, and that everything must be done to permit Jesus to regain his consciousness and strength if he had not passed through transition, they realised that they were not to injure, to torture, or in any way affect the ease and comfort of Jesus,

11. Milligan, William, *The Resurrection of our Lord*, pp. 76–7.

but to relieve him as quickly as possible from the agony in which they found him.

'It may be interesting to call attention to the fact that nowhere in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, is the positive statement as an observation of one of those disciples that Jesus died on the cross or that he was dead when they removed him from the cross and placed him in the tomb'.[12]

Beginning with the closing years of the nineteenth century as time has passed, evidence has become progressively available which puts it beyond doubt that Jesus did not die on the Cross. We shall now proceed to set forth one item, a most important one, of that evidence.

12. H. Spencer Lewis, *The Mystical Life of Jesus*, pp. 270–71.

# 4

# SHROUD

The entire material relating to the subject of the Holy Shroud of Turin, as it has come to be called, reproduced in this section, is extracted from *Inquest on Jesus Christ* by John Reban, as translated from the German by Willi Frischauer. The Foreword is by R. H. Havercraft.

A short statement of the history of the shroud, so far as is known with certainty, is set out in chapter three of that book. Since 1568, the shroud has been kept in Turin Cathedral in the chapel of the Dukes of Savoy. Every thirty-three years it is exhibited to the public. When it was exhibited in 1898, some attempt was made to photograph it, but at that time photographic techniques were in their infancy. At the time of its next exhibition in 1931, steps were taken to subject it to minute photographic examination. A series of photographs were taken with the utmost care which revealed certain surprising and previously unsuspected features that enabled the students of the Shroud to go on to make certain astonishing deductions.

The negative of one of the photographs revealed a most important feature of the Shroud, which is that a positive picture appears on the photographic negative. On the negative imprint, the bloodstains also appear as the negative of the picture, while the contours of a body appear as a positive. Scientists take this phenomenon as proof that the imprint is not the work of an artist. It is difficult enough to reproduce the positive of a picture with such delicate light shadings, but to achieve a perfect negative by artificial means

is quite impossible. The biggest enlargements of the photographs established that there is no trace of any dye whatsoever on the fabric.

It would seem that the Shroud acted as a kind of photographic plate because it had been impregnated with a solution of aloes, which reacted chemically on the spices which, as the Gospels describe, Joseph of Arimathaea and Nicodemus used on the body of Jesus for his resuscitation. As a result, the Shroud bears the image of the body which was laid on it. It also reveals that bleeding from the body took place after it was laid in the Shroud.

In 1959 The German Research Convention For The Shroud of Jesus petitioned Pope John XXIII to permit a small portion of the Shroud to be removed so that further tests, made possible by modern scientific discoveries and techniques, could be carried out. They wanted the bloodstains to be subjected to chemical and microscopic examination; the texture of the Shroud itself could be examined in the light of X-rays, infra-red rays, and ultra-violet rays; and an exact dating of the Shroud could be made by means of an atom clock, the carbon 14 process. The petition was rejected, not apparently by the Pope, but by the authorities in Turin. Recently, however, the present Pope, Paul VI, seems to have granted the necessary permission and it is expected that a small portion of the Shroud might become available in April 1978 for further scientific investigation.

This book says that we can be certain that Jesus did not want to die on the cross – hence his fear of death as described by the Evangelists. Where death is welcome, fear holds no sway over man. Although Jesus knew that his suffering was necessary and inevitable, he could not have wanted to die on the accursed wood, the gallows, the cross. His fear of death is revealed to us in this fascinating and significant prayer:

'And he went a little further, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as Thou wilt' (Matt. 26:39).

We can conclude from this passage that a man prepared to die of his own free will and to offer himself for sacrificial death is unlikely to fall on his face and pray in anguish that the cup may pass from him.

The problem appears in an entirely different light if one knows that the contemporary (not the currently available) texts of the books of the Prophets suggested that Jesus would have to suffer much for mankind but would, in the end, be saved by God and rise again. It explains this curious fear of death which does not seem to fit into the pattern of Christian teaching. Jesus knew he would be captured, indicted, scourged, and crucified, but was certain he would be saved, rise again, and live on. For this was the message of many prophecies in the Old Testament texts which were available in his time.

Knowledge of the road he had to take was heavy on his mind. Roman execution techniques had been so well perfected that there seemed little hope that the prophets' predictions would be fulfilled. Nevertheless, he had to act as the Holy Scriptures and the will of God ordained. How much reason Jesus had to fear death emerges clearly from Mark, 14:36: 'Abba, Father, All things are possible unto thee; take away this cup from me: nevertheless not what I will, but what Thou wilt'. In the most direct and explicit manner Jesus implored God, the Father, to spare him: 'Take away this cup from me'. The clear, definite, and certain conclusion is: Jesus did not want to die on the cross.

Today, we are in a position to add – a statement borne out by scientific proof as we shall see later – that God, the Father, to whom Jesus prayed, answered the son's prayer and

let the cup of death pass by; we can even say that he never intended to let Jesus die on the cross.

It is a contention for which this volume provides the most extensive and detailed proof.

All the relevant original documents relating to the Shroud were in the hands of Pope Pius XI, and his staff of experts spent many years examining and verifying them. On 6 September 1936, the Pope summed up the result of these examinations in the following pronouncement:

> These are the images of the Divine Redeemer. We might say they are the most beautiful, most moving and dearest we can imagine. They derive directly from the object surrounded by mystery which – this can safely be said – it has now been established is no product of human hands. It is the Holy Shroud at Turin. We say it is surrounded by mystery because much remains unexplained about this affair, which is certainly holy as no other is. But this much can be said – it is absolutely certain that it is not the work of man.

This unequivocal statement by the highest authority of the Roman church acknowledging the authenticity of the Shroud, was published on 7/8 September 1936, in the *Osservatore Romano*, the official organ of the Vatican.

Five Roman Popes have honoured this relic with their indulgence – Sixtus IV, Julius II, Clement VII, and Gregory XIII. This is what Pope Benedict XIV, an authority on controversial religious questions, had to say about it:

> The Shroud, a very special memento of our Lord, is kept at Turin, and the Popes have confirmed that it is identical with the Shroud in which Jesus was wrapped.

More than thirty other Roman Popes have also recognised the Shroud, including Pope Pius XI, who was an archaeologist and scientist of world-wide repute.

If God had wanted to uphold Jesus, he would have had to save him and surely not to let him die on the cross, which Moses called the accursed wood.

Jesus himself was confident that he would be saved, as the Bible predicted. But one can understand that, as the climax on the cross approached – the decisive moment in the history of religion – even Jesus began to doubt and lose hope. My God, my God, why has thou forsaken me?

Jesus knew that, if he died on the cross, it meant, according to the laws of Moses, that God had forsaken him. These laws entitle the Jewish people to say: God did not uphold Jesus, for he died on the cross!

The history of the Jews shows throughout that, as far as they were concerned, death on the accursed cross was the end. But God did save Jesus and did not let him die on the cross; saved him as the Holy Scriptures had prophesied and as the rabbis themselves expected that God would save the Messiah. The genuine Shroud of Jesus provides positive proof.

After years of intensive study of all aspects of the Shroud Dr. Theodor Hirt, Professor at a German University, submitted the results of his research to the Congregation Secretary at the Vatican. He summed up his submission that the imprint visible on the Shroud was, in fact, the imprint of a body and it reveals:

1. A stab from a lance, but no injury to the heart;
2. Evidence of activity of the heart during the removal of the body from the cross, and
3. Incontrovertible evidence of activity of the heart after the body had been removed from the cross and placed in the shroud.

The evidence that had become available was brought to the knowledge of many people, further enquiries were initiated and many experts were questioned. Time and again,

they accepted the evidence as scientifically correct and reliable. To obtain completely objective replies, it was the practice in many instances not to mention Jesus Christ at all. The aim was to get opinions based on purely scientific grounds uninfluenced by religious considerations.

The result is that the fact that the heart of Jesus was beating after his body was removed from the cross has been proved beyond doubt and cannot be contradicted.

At the end of his exposition, which set out in detail the evidence furnished by the photographs and the conclusions to be drawn therefrom, Professor Hirt said:

I should like to sum up by emphasising once more that we have so much evidence and so many testimonials about the activity of the heart in the body of Jesus during and after his removal from the cross that it can never be disproved.

Mr. Solomon, who by a strange coincidence had provided the occasion for the exposition by Professor Hirt at Cologne, on return to New York gave a circle of intimate friends an account of the whole affair and at the end of it he observed:

You cannot imagine how confused I was when I left Cologne University. I jumped into a taxi and went to the nearest Pan-American Airways office to make a booking for New York, collected my things from the hotel, and was just in time to catch the plane. These discoveries about the Shroud strike you who are Christians differently; but I am a Jew and these things are more important to me as a Jew than as a journalist. I recovered my composure only when I was seated in the aircraft. The long flight gave me an opportunity to think the matter over quietly. Sleep was out of the question.

How can I describe it? In my head my thoughts revolved around the sentence: Jesus did not die on the cross. From this followed the realisation: This means that we Jews did not murder him, could not have murdered him.

Perhaps you cannot understand how I feel; within a few hours I was forced to make a personal decision. It is true that in the first instance I had taken it all in as a journalist; but who can divide himself in a matter like this? It affects Christians like you in your own way, and Jews like us in our way – but just as strongly. To us it becomes evident that, if we Jews could not have murdered Jesus, it follows that he was what he told us he was – our Messiah. This was the only reason why for almost two thousand years Jews could not believe in Jesus Christ!

But this changes everything. In our blindness, we Jews tried to murder him and believed that we had done so. Because of this blindness He cast us out from the land of our Fathers. For nearly two thousand years He has let us be punished and chastised directly and indirectly. But because our guilt as it appears now, was not complete, He has opened the doors of the land of our Fathers to us again.

But this was not the end of the matter for Mr. Solomon. Sometime later he went back to Cologne and had a long discussion with Professor Hirt. In the course of this discussion Professor Hirt drew M. Solomon's attention to the fact that all four Evangelists had described the end of Jesus on the cross in the words: 'He gave up the Ghost', and that the Greek word for Ghost was *pneuma*. He proceeded: In the old world the term *pneuma* embraced everything that represented the physical life of the human body. Blood circulation and its function, for instance, were entirely unknown. Thus, activity of the heart was not recognised as the decisive factor of life. It was breathing that represented life.

In the ancient world, death was a fact when the body was without *pneuma*. If breathing stopped, *pneuma* had left the body and the man was dead. As a result of this generally accepted view, hanging, strangling and drowning were regarded as the most shameful kind of death, because it was

assumed that it forced *pneuma* to perish in the body and prevented it from entering into another world.

This was the position at the time. Revival in our sense of the word was unknown; the first to suspect that the giving up of the *pneuma* might not be the end of everything was the Roman doctor, Galen, who lived in the second century.

*Pneuma* was an all-embracing term. A soldier in battle in olden days aimed at the chest of his opponent. The whole chest was regarded as the target because it was known that a stab in the chest would result in the *pneuma* leaving the body, resulting in death. The modern medical term is Pneumothorac, which stops the function of the lung because air penetrates into the chest. This condition is dangerous but does not always result in death. In the case of Jesus it can be assumed that lung activity ended before the lance pierced the chest. The result of a stab in the chest is the end of breathing, the giving up of the *pneuma*, which was described as death. As things appeared in those days it meant that the man was dead.

For the world of his time Jesus was dead – but he was not dead in the medical sense of our time. What we call medical death is a different death, the death of a different world.

Once more we see things in the context of the contemporary world. He who had given up the ghost was dead, and this is what was said about Jesus.

But today, giving up the ghost is not the same as being dead; only when the heart stands still is death a medical fact. The activity of the heart and blood circulation are the criteria. Jesus was not dead, because the activity of the heart continued after the execution.

The *pneuma* having been given up, the implication was that death had occurred. In the classical sense there was no

more life in the body because breathing was part of life. But, for the purpose of the Resurrection as God willed and planned it, the continued activity of the heart had a practical purpose – and no more – because He intended it to be a resurrection of the same body, the same flesh which Jesus had before the execution. It is this fact of the complete continuation of existence after the execution which theologians have obscured for nearly two thousand years; they could not visualise a genuine and truly physical resurrection. But contemporary accounts show that it was exactly the same body before and after the resurrection, which was a natural factor in God's plan, because there is no doubt at all that the whole process was God's plan. Many centuries earlier prophecies predicted these events quite unequivocally. Jesus took them to refer to himself and predicted that he would be handed over to the executioners, would be crucified and rise again.

Professor Hirt was asked: 'Does this mean that Jesus, the man, knew the exact course of future events, including the smallest details of his resurrection as it would unfold?'

Professor Hirt replied, 'No, it was not God's plan that he should know, and he did not know or he would not have exclaimed from the cross: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me!" He was not allowed to know the details of God's plan; if he had, his human side could not have remained so uninhibited. Inhibitions might have caused him to believe differently – Jesus was, after all, wholly man – which might have jeopardised God's plan. It is absolutely certain that it was God's intention to smite the Pharisees, the Sadducees, the Scribes, and the Romans with blindness in order to accomplish His plan.'

Here Professor Hirt was asked whether he had meant that all the genuine knowledge that mankind acquires and dis-

covers is the will of God, to which he replied that it was never otherwise.

On one occasion in an address to a gathering of doctors Pope Pius XII touched upon the attitude of the Church to the border-line between life and death. He described the revival of patients by the artificial induction of Oxygen, as, for instance, in the case of paralysis or the presence of suffocation symptoms, as morally permissible. After his address the Pope was asked at what precise moment, in the view of the Church, death occurred. Did it occur when breathing came to an end, or when the blood circulation ceased?

The Pope's answer was, 'There are no religious criteria, it is for the doctor to provide the answer.'

Applying this dictum to the execution of Jesus we rely on medical science – according to the Pope, the authority in this matter. Medical science says that physical life comes to an end when circulation ceases. Thus, in the case of Jesus life did not come to an end on the cross.

In all these centuries, research has produced no precise explanation of the death of Jesus on the cross, at least, none that stands up to critical examination. From a medical aspect three main points require answers, each of which must coincide with the other and fit into the whole pattern.

1. Jesus suffered no fatal injury in the course of his Passion.

2. There is an evident major contrast between the condition of Jesus, who according to the Gospel, was fully conscious to the end and the usual condition of a gravely injured, dying man.

3. The end came suddenly, virtually without any previous warning.

After a careful consideration and comparison of these three points and all possible causes of death, there remains

only heart failure. Heart failure is a collective description for several causes of death in which heart activity ceases instantly. Yet, heart failure must be eliminated for two reasons. First, a young and healthy man of thirty-three does not usually die of heart failure. Secondly, an unmistakable indication has come down to us making heart failure seem impossible. A man suffering from heart failure would have been unable to speak or to call out loudly: It is finished. Such an exclamation presupposed a full realisation that the end had come, the realisation and the exclamation together requiring only a few seconds. But heart failure does not allow the victim even a second. Therefore, it must have been a process which – from the moment of terror to the bowing of the head – took anything between fifteen and forty-five seconds.

In the case of Jesus a brief phase in the passage of events has been overlooked, or rather not properly considered.

While this is without doubt a fully established case of suffocation, one link of the chain of evidence is missing – a small link, yet one of the greatest importance. Suffocation, yes, to the expert, this is what the photographs of the Turin Shroud clearly reveal. But this slow suffocation came to a spontaneous end!

A man on the cross, only a minute away from giving up the ghost, is not likely to ask for a drink in a loud and clear voice audible to all. Assuming that at this time the suffocation agony had reached such a stage, the words: I thirst; would hardly have been spoken. But they must have been spoken because they are in the Gospels. It follows that the suffocation agony was not near the end. It was probably in the third and last stage, but this does not adequately explain how it came about that two minutes later, Jesus gave up the ghost. Contemporary accounts of the critical stage bear this out.

When research on the Shroud had reached the point where

suffocation was established as the cause of death, the whole course of the death struggle of Jesus became clear.

1. It was suffocation, as borne out by the physical condition which the imprints on the Shroud of Turin reflect.
2. The manner of death was such that medical analysis can follow each stage from the beginning of the crucifixion to the time of Jesus saying: I thirst. The exact moment, two minutes later, when Jesus gave up the ghost is also clearly established.
3. In an ordinary case of death by suffocation as described, it would be impossible for the doomed person to speak so clearly only a minute before giving up the ghost.

It follows that this was an abnormal case. Psychological considerations confirm this. Even if a man in such a condition were capable of speaking, what he would crave is not water or a drink but air! because he would be bound to realise that he would choke without it.

It is the request for a drink which reflects the true state of affairs at that point of time. Drinking is only possible if the air channels are in good condition. That the air channels and breathing organs were no longer in a normal condition but in a state of cramp was one of the causes of suffocation, but not the only one. At this precise moment, there must be a link missing from the chain. The time has come to put it in its place. It is this link which caused the spontaneous end which surprised everybody. The end was brought about by one definite cause: the vinegar.

Even in the case of a healthy person, the intrusion of vinegar into the air channel can produce the most serious spasms of suffocation. This is even more so when the body is tired and exhausted and all the organs directly or indirectly

associated with breathing are in a state of cramp. Furthermore, we are here dealing with a man who, after a slow process of suffocation, is already at the door of death which looks like being his inevitable fate.

Did the man on the cross want vinegar when he exclaimed: I thirst! Certainly not. He may have expected to be given the kind of vinegar water which the Roman soldiers drank on long marches – water they usually found in springs or carried with them in tubes, and to which they added vinegar. To give the man on the cross pure vinegar was obviously an infamy perpetrated by the hangman's assistant. We know that in antiquity there was no such thing as mercy at an execution.

It was a fundamental mistake of scientific research to present this offering of vinegar as an act as harmless as if it had been vinegar water, or to interpret it even as an act of kindness. Jesus, we must remember, was as a criminal, and the doubts and wavering which beset a few people after he gave up the ghost was their reaction to the natural phenomena which accompanied it.

The mystery is how these circumstances could escape the attention of the scientists for so long. It is clearly striking that three Evangelists have corresponding accounts of Jesus giving up the ghost immediately after he had been given the vinegar, one account recording the loud cry which was not understood, the other the words which proved that Jesus realised it is finished. Since, medically speaking, giving up the ghost means the end of breathing, the testimony of these three logically implies that breathing ended immediately after the administration of the vinegar.

When Jesus asked for a drink, he was fully conscious and did not have the feeling that his last minute had come. In the course of the slow death struggle, he was thirsty. But, in

normal circumstances, this struggle would not have ended as yet. He was given the vinegar which, immediately upon entering the air passage (speeded up by the fact that he sucked it from a sponge) cut off the air passing to and fro from the lungs, and instantly incapacitated those regions which were already affected by cramp. He had only just enough time to realise it was finished, and for a last cry which gave expression to that realisation. This was the cry which was heard by the people around him.

There was only just enough air in the lungs to make the effort possible. Even a man in this desperate condition can speak for a few more seconds, – say ten to thirty – without additional intake of air. The suffering of Jesus was at an end and all who witnessed it were surprised how quickly it had come.

From a medico–scientific point of view what can be said about the final phase of the crucifixion is this. In cases of death by suffocation, whatever the cause, heart activity does not necessarily end when breathing stops – which is the moment when the ghost is given up. It is true that the supply of oxygen to the blood ends, and that is bad for the heart. But, as has often been observed, the heart is capable of greatly reducing its volume of activity, and, in many similar serious cases of suffocation, heart activity is known to have continued after breathing had come to an end. Hence the attempts at revival in everyday cases of suffocation which, once breathing has stopped, make sense and have a prospect of success only if the heart is still active.

The evident result of research into these events can be summed up as follows. Jesus did not die when he gave up the ghost. His heart continued to beat. Nothing occurred that brought his beating heart to a standstill; this can be proved by means of the Shroud of Jesus. The Shroud also

testifies to the fact that the heart of Jesus was still active after his removal from the cross. In a legal sense the execution was not completed. To execute a man means putting his body to death. In the case of Jesus this did not happen.

In the Greek version the following expressions are to be found in the relevant passages:

1. *Apeheken to pneuma*, which means: He gave up his ghost.
2. *Exepneumen*, meaning: He breathed out his last.
3. *Paredoken to pneuma*, again: He surrendered the ghost.

Thus *pneuma* recurs in all three versions. It means breath, air, spirit, Holy Ghost. This proves again that nowhere in the Bible have words been used which indicate complete physical annihilation. The Greek and Latin languages had other words to convey that meaning. In the King James Version the relevant verses are set out as follows:

1. Matthew (27:50): Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost.
2. Mark (15:37): And Jesus cried with a loud voice, and gave up the ghost.
3. Luke (23:46): . . . he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit; and having said thus, he gave up the ghost.
4. John (19:30): . . . and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.

In Britain a popular edition of the Bible was published under the title the New English Bible in which these passages have been printed as follows:

1. Matthew (27:50): Jesus again gave a loud cry, and breathed his last.
2. Mark (15:37): Then Jesus gave a loud cry and died.
3. Luke (23:46): . . . and said, Father into they hands I commit my spirit; and with these words he died.

4. John (19:30): He bowed his head and gave up his spirit [or breathed out his life].

It will be observed that these versions obviously deviate from the ancient wording, only in the case of John does the original text run parallel with the translation, but even there it reduces the effect with the footnote, he breathed out his life. In Mark and Luke the giving up of the ghost is transformed into physical annihilation by the use of the word died, and in Matthew the original text was mutilated in another respect.

We think it is not justified to describe a translation as God's word if its wording and meaning do not correspond with the text of the original scripture. It is of the greatest importance that the public should get an absolutely clear idea of what is written in the Bible.

Whatever the meaning of the phrase: He gave up his ghost, there is no compelling reason to assume that it implies cardiac death or syncope.

According to the Apostolic Letter of Pope John XXIII to all bishops, published in the *Osservatore Romano* of 2 July 1960, mankind did not need the death of Jesus for its salvation. This memorable letter dealt with the importance of the blood of Jesus Christ. It shows quite clearly that mankind's complete salvation was accomplished through the blood of Jesus Christ, in which case death was not a necessary element. But if death was essential, the blood of Jesus was of no importance.

In his Easter Message of 1961, Pope John XXIII once more emphasised complete salvation through the blood of Jesus when he said: '. . . for the salvation of the whole flock of Jesus Christ whom he, the divine shepherd of souls, has redeemed with his blood.'

This is in accord with the basic message of the community

of the Apostles in Jerusalem. At no time did the Salvation through Death take root in the old community in Palestine. On the contrary, there were bitter theological quarrels between the old community and Paul, who taught in the neighbouring countries. Modern research has brought to light that most of the invectives and curses which Paul wrote in his letters were aimed at the Palestinian community and the followers of the other Apostles. Those who did rely on Paul built on sand.

Professor Hirt's final pronouncement was:

> Scientific discoveries and findings of the past decades as well as the unequivocal and incontrovertible revelation of the Shroud of Jesus, prove that all those who have stated in speech or writing that Jesus died on the cross, have spoken or written an untruth, albeit in ignorance of the true facts. Those who henceforth assert in speech or writing that Jesus died on the cross will speak and write that untruth. They will be circulating deliberate lies because they must now be aware of the true facts.

# 5

# RESURRECTION

The conclusions reached on an examination of the enlarged photographs of the Shroud leave no room for doubt that when the body of Jesus was removed from the cross the action of the heart had not been stopped or suspended and that the heart continued in action after the body was placed on the Shroud. If it had been left in that condition without any further ministration, the probability is that the prolonged stoppage of the supply of oxygen to the heart would have brought the action of the heart to a standstill and Jesus would have died. Unfortunately there is a complete gap in the Biblical account with regard to the activities of Joseph of Arimathaea and Nicodemus after the body of Jesus, wrapped in the shroud, had been placed in the sepulchre. There is, however, one item of information which appears to furnish an explanation of what happened thereafter, and that is that Nicodemus had brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about an hundred pound weight, and the body of Jesus was wound in linen clothes with the spices (John 19:39–40). It was the action of the aloes on the spices that operated to restore the breathing which had stopped and that in turn helped to maintain and strengthen the action of the heart, though no doubt it would have taken some time for Jesus to recover complete consciousness.

This happened during Friday night. Again, we have no indication whatsoever how Jesus passed the day of Saturday and Saturday night.

Matthew alone, of the four Evangelists, mentions that after

the body of Jesus had been laid in the sepulchre Joseph rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulchre and departed. And there was Mary Magdalene and the other Mary, sitting over against the sepulchre (Matt. 27:60–1). It is not mentioned, however, whether they were sitting inside the sepulchre or outside of it and when they did depart. The account continues that the next day, that is to say on the Sabbath, the chief priests and Pharisees came to Pilate, saying, Sir, we remember that that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, After three days I will rise again. Command, therefore, that the sepulchre be made sure until the third day, lest his disciples come by night and steal him away, and say unto the people, He is risen from the dead: So the last error shall be worse than the first. Pilate said unto them: Ye have a watch: go your way, make it as sure as you can. So they went, and made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone, and setting a watch (Matt. 27:62–6).

This shows that Pilate was indifferent and left the priests and Pharisees to take such precautions as they thought fit; but the precautions that they took were rendered nugatory, as there was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it (Matt. 28:2). 'For fear of him the keepers did shake and became as dead men' (Matt. 28:4).

We know that the sepulchre had been prepared by Joseph of Arimathaea for himself and his family and that it belonged to him and therefore he had right of free access to it. Besides, it is unthinkable that after having obtained Pilate's permission that the body of Jesus be made over to him, he should have placed the body in the sepulchre and should not have taken any further care of it. The same applies to Nicodemus, who had provided himself with a large quantity of aloes and spices with which to minister to the body of Jesus.

There is thus left a great deal of room for conjecture and speculation. An attempt is made in the Inquest on Jesus Christ to reconstruct the events. We set out the result for whatever it is worth.

While in the sepulchre, the body of flesh and blood – or, as Jesus himself later put it, of flesh and bones – had reverted to the condition which made physical resurrection possible or, to make it quite clear, a resurrection of a body which breathed and had an active heart.

Mary of Magdala found the sepulchre open, hurried back to tell Peter and John who ran to the sepulchre as fast as they could. They saw the linen clothes lie, and the napkin that was about his head' (John 20:6–7). There were obviously several cloths; the cloths were there but Jesus was gone. 'They discussed it; then the disciples went away again unto their own home' (John 20:10). Jesus was practically naked. His clothes had been taken from him, and all he had were the linen cloths with which he had been covered in the sepulchre. He just managed to wrap one of these cloths around his body to cover his bareness; but he could not go to Emmaus like this nor could he, so inadequately clothed, go to the city to obtain proper clothes. He solved the problem very simply. He found the garments of a gardener – most likely in a garden shed nearby – borrowed them and went into town and obtained more suitable clothing. Later, he returned the gardener's outfit.

'While still wearing gardener's clothes Jesus was evidently observing closely what was going on by the empty sepulchre, when he saw two Apostles, Peter and John, inspecting it. He let them go away unto their own home. Mary Magdalene remained behind, helpless and crying. She cried because they had taken away her lord, and she knew not where they had laid him' (John 20.13). 'When she had thus said, she turned

herself back and saw Jesus standing and knew not that it was Jesus because he was wearing gardener's clothes. Jesus saith unto her, woman, why weepest thou? Whom seekest thou? She, supposing him to be the gardener, saith unto him, Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away' (John 20:14–15). With these words Mary Magdalene seems to have turned away from Jesus – the gardener – to look farther when Jesus said to her: Mary. She turned herself, and saith unto him: Rabboni; which is to say, Master. Only now did she recognise Jesus because it seems only he would say Mary in this particular way. He said: 'Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God' (John 20:17). Mary went and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord and he had spoken these things unto her.

On the evening of the same day, Jesus, no longer in the clothes of a gardener, was on his way to Emmaus, a village near Jerusalem, when he caught up with two disciples going in the same direction. Jesus did indeed look strange. No wonder the disciples did not recognise him. As it was written: 'But their eyes were holden that they should not know him' (Luke 24:16). 'They were confused. From the way they talked it was clear that they did not know what was happening, and their interpretations differed. Jesus listened with great interest but finally exclaimed: O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: Ought not Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into his glory' (Luke 29:25–6), and he explained what the scriptures had said about him beginning with Moses and taking them through all the prophets.

Here we have a clear statement by Jesus after the resurrec-

tion pointing to the prophecies and their complete fulfilment as borne out by his own experiences. He describes himself as the Messiah and speaks of suffering; but there is not a word about dying.

What did the prophets say? The Dead Sea Scrolls and other new discoveries have revealed fresh facts. All the prophets predicted that Jesus would be saved by God; that he would have to suffer. But there was no mention of death in the whole of the Old Testament; where there appears to be, it is due to incorrect translation.

Thus they approached the village of Emmaus which was as far as the Apostles wanted to go. Jesus was about to move on but they urged him: 'Abide with us: for it is toward evening and the day is far spent. And he went in to tarry with them . . . as he sat at meat with them, he took bread and blessed it and broke it, and gave to them' (Luke 24:29–30). Now they recognised him. His manner of praying and blessing was inimitable; 'and their eyes were opened and they knew him; and he vanished out of their sight' (Luke 24:31). 'They rose up the same hour, and returned to Jerusalem and found the eleven gathered together and them that were with them' (Luke 24:32–3).

'They joined the gathering and told what had passed on the way to Emmaus. There was much agitation and discussion until suddenly Jesus himself stood in the midst of them and saith unto them, peace be on you' (Luke 24:36) 'and calmed their fears. But when they too did not recognise him at once and thought it was a stranger who had surprised them, Jesus spoke to them again. But they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit' (Luke 24:37). They must have looked distressed and doubtful, for Jesus said: 'Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself:

handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as you see me have' (Luke 24:38–9). 'And while they believed yet not for joy and wondered, he said unto them, Have ye here any meat? And they gave him a piece of a broiled fish, and of an honeycomb. And he took it and did eat before them' (Luke 24:41–2).

On the evening on which Jesus showed himself to his disciples, one of them, Thomas, was missing. When he was told by the others what they had seen and heard he said to them: 'Except I shall see in his hands the print of nails . . . and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe' (John 20:25). On a later occasion when Jesus met them again and Thomas was with them, he said to Thomas: 'Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side; and be not faithless but believing (John 20:27–8).

Think what you will of Thomas; he has become for all eternity the principal witness that Jesus existed with the same physical body as before the crucifixion. The same wounds which Thomas wanted to touch imply that it was the same body.

On a further occasion Jesus again shared bread and fish with his disciples (John 21:12–13).

Whether one is able to accept every detail of the reconstruction of the event of the resurrection set out above, its one undeniable feature is that after having been taken down from the cross, Jesus was resuscitated in his physical body. He moved about and met the disciples on several occasions in his physical body which bore the marks of injuries from which he had suffered and ate with them, which makes it clear that he was completely human and felt all the human needs, including the need of nourishment.

Bernard Ellen[1] maintains that the ordinary view of the

1. Ellen, Bernard M., *Story behind the Gospels*, pp. 107–8.

resurrection and his ascension to heaven with his physical body cannot be substantiated.

In the Encyclopaedia Biblica,[2] the view is expressed that nothing can be conjectured with any certainty, except that an appearance of Jesus to the disciples is described.

According to Kirsopp Lake: In the earliest tradition there was no account of the actual resurrection, but only statements as to the grave and the appearance of the risen Lord.[3]

The earliest record which has come down to us from the beginning of the Christian Movement, apparently is that body of material represented in the common non-Marcan sources of Matthew and Luke, . . . It is a very surprising fact that there is not a single reference to Jesus in all that material.[4]

Now that the evidence of the Shroud emphatically confirms the conclusion to be drawn from the material available on the subject in the Gospels, to the effect that Jesus did not die on the cross, the question of resurrection loses all importance. We are left with the consequential situation that Jesus had not died when he was taken down from the cross, and when he was wrapped in the linen cloth and was placed in the sepulchre. All that happened, therefore, was that through the effects of the aloes and spices with which the linen cloth was impregnated and which may have been applied to the body of Jesus also, his breathing was restored and he gradually regained consciousness. This was a case of resuscitation, not of resurrection in the sense of a dead body coming back to life again.

2. *Encyclopaedia Biblica*, Vol. II, p. 1881.

3. Kirsopp Lake, *The Historical Evidence for the Resurrection of Jesus Christ*, 1907, p. 231.

4. S. V. McCasland, *The Resurrection of Jesus*, 1932, p. 131.

# 6

# ASCENSION

The central and conclusive factor that must be kept in mind when approaching the question of the ascension of Jesus to heaven is that Jesus was put on the cross in his physical body, was taken down from the cross in the same physical body, and the same physical body was placed in the sepulchre. It was the same body that was resuscitated and it was in that body that he thereafter met the disciples. That body was not a spiritual or transfigured body or a spirit. The failure to keep this reality in view has occasioned a vast amount of confusion in the Christian mind, beginning with St. Paul. Indeed, a section of the Muslims have also suffered from that confusion. After a large number of Christians had entered the ranks of Islam and had brought their mythical traditions with them, an increasing section of Muslims began to be influenced by these Christian traditions, and among other erroneous notions, adopted the idea that Jesus had been raised to heaven in his physical body.

It is true that the Holy Quran says that God reassured Jesus: 'I shall cause thee to die a natural death, and shall exalt thee to Myself' (3:56). Those Muslims who mistakenly think that Jesus was raised bodily to heaven profess to find the authority for their mistaken belief in the divine promise set out in this verse: And shall exalt thee to Myself. There can, however, not be the least doubt that this exaltation means spiritual exaltation which would follow the natural death of Jesus. The context of the verse is that God Almighty sets forth that the enemies of Jesus had devised a plan to

bring about the death of Jesus upon the cross, which would make him accursed, according to the Mosaic pronouncement in Deut. 21:23, and God devised His plan to deliver Jesus from such a death so that on his natural death, far from becoming accursed, and thus being cast away from God, he would, like all the righteous, be exalted towards God. There is no indication here whatever of his being raised bodily to heaven. Such an interpretation of the verse would amount to doing violence to the context and idiom of the expression exaltation, and would be contradictory of the clear pronouncements of the Holy Quran that the earth is the natural and determined habitat of man and that man cannot exist in conditions that do not correspond to the conditions of the earth. There are also instances in the Quran which make it clear that exaltation, in the context in which it has been used in this verse, connotes spiritual exaltation and not raising the physical body to heaven. Besides, in this verse the exaltation was to be towards God and not to heaven, which is conclusive that the exaltation was a spiritual phenomenon.

For instance: 'Recite to them the case of him to whom We gave Our Signs, but he passed them by. Then Satan went after him and he became one of those who had gone astray. Had We so willed, We would have exalted him (*la rafaanahu*) by means of Our Signs, but he leaned towards the earth and followed his vain desires' (7:176–7). This means that the person designated would have been spiritually exalted had he taken advantage of divine signs, but he ignored those signs and leaned towards the earth, that is to say, followed his vain desires. Righteousness brings about spiritual exaltation, and the pursuit of vain desires pulls a person down to earth.

At another place it is said: 'Recite the account of Idris (Enoch) according to this Book; he was indeed a righteous

person and a Prophet, and We exalted him to a lofty station' (19:57–8). The exaltation of Jesus was of the same type.

The earth has been appointed as man's natural habitat, as, for instance, it is said: 'There is an abode for you and a provision for a time on this earth. Therein shall you live, and therein shall you die, and therefrom shall you be brought forth' (7:25–6).

At another place it is said: 'Have We not made the earth vast enough to gather the living and the dead' (77:26–7)?

On one occasion the opponents of the Holy Prophet assured him that they would believe in him if he would ascend up into heaven and bring down therefrom a book that they could read; in answer to which he was directed to tell them: 'Holy is my Lord. I am but a human being sent as a Messenger' (17:94). This means that it is contray to God's law for a human being to ascend to heaven in his physical body, and that the Holy Prophet, being human, though a divine Messenger, could not ascend to heaven.

A good deal of confusion has resulted from the double connotation of the word heaven. It means both the sky and all that it comprises as a geographical entity and also the spiritual state and condition that the righteous would enjoy after they pass on from this life. The human body is so designed and is invested with such faculties as enable it to function properly in the conditions that prevail upon the earth. It cannot survive under any other conditions. If by ascent to heaven of any person it is meant to convey that such person has departed physically from the earth and has taken up his abode somewhere in or beyond the atmosphere of the earth with his physical body, or has been admitted with that body into the conditions of the spiritual state which is promised to the righteous after their demise, in either case the statement amounts to an absurdity.

Jesus was a human being, righteous and a prophet. After his experience on the cross and in the sepulchre he was still a human being, with the same physical body and its needs as he possessed before being put upon the cross. He was most anxious that this should be recognised by his disciples, so that they should become witnesses to the fact that he had not died upon the cross and had not become accursed. That is why he drew their attention to the fact that he was not a spirit but himself in his physical body: 'Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have. And when he had thus spoken he showed them his hands and his feet' (Luke 29:39–40). 'But they still wondered and did not believe and he said unto them, Have ye here any meat? and they gave him a piece of broiled fish and of an honeycomb. And he took it, and did eat before them' (Luke 24:41–3). Had he not taken such pains to convince them of his humanity they might have been left under the impression that he had died upon the cross and that they were now beholding his spirit. Each time and wherever he was in their company, he ate with them to emphasise his physical needs.

Nowhere did Jesus himself give any indication of his intended physical ascension to heaven. So far as the Gospels are concerned they do not today contain any positive affirmation that Jesus had ascended physically to heaven. The narrative in Matthew and John stops short of the alleged event of the ascension. All that Mark and Luke state in this context is: 'So then after the Lord had spoken unto them he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God' (Mark 16:19). This is more a statement of belief than a record of a physical observable event. The statement in Luke does not carry the matter any further: 'And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried

up into heaven' (Luke 24:51). Once he was parted from them they ceased to be witnesses of what happened to him.

Another difficulty in the way of the bodily ascent of Jesus to heaven is, what became his habitat after such ascent and how are his physical needs being met?

If it is suggested that the ascent of Jesus to heaven was not physical but the ascent of his spirit, the question would still remain, then what happened to his body?

The answer to these and similar other questions is to be sought in considering the purpose of his advent. He had stated positively and emphatically: 'I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel. . . . It is not meet to take the children's bread and to cast it to dogs' (Matt. 15:24–6). There is a reflection of the same sentiment in: 'Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you' (Matt. 7:6).

Now it is a historical fact that of the twelve tribes of Israel only two were in Judaea where Jesus passed the greater part of his life up to the event of the crucifixion. He thus fulfilled only a fraction of his mission. He had himself indicated that he had still to convey his message to the other tribes of Israel: 'And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd' (John 10:16).

Thus the major portion of the mission of Jesus would have remained unfulfilled if his life on earth would have come to an end a few days after the event of the crucifixion. It was, therefore, incumbent upon him to journey to the lands in which the lost tribes of Israel had been scattered at the end of their Babylonian captivity. Jesus was sure that they would hear his voice, that is to say, they would accept him. These lands were situated in the north-eastern sector of Asia extending

from Syria, through Iran and Afghanistan into Kashmir and possibly Tibet. We shall take up his trail a few pages further on.

# 7

# SECOND COMING

The world of religion is familiar with the concept of the second coming of great religious teachers who have passed away, but curiously enough all those who are looking forward to the fulfilment of the prophecies relating to a second advent of a great teacher expect that he would return to the earth in his physical body. This concept has been responsible for great confusion, bewilderment, and conflict.

In the case of Jesus himself one factor that reinforced the opposition and hostility of the Jewish divines to his claim of being the Messiah whose advent had been foretold in their scriptures, was that it had been prophecied in Malachi 4:5 that Elijah, the prophet, would be sent before the advent of the Messiah. 'And his disciples asked him, saying, Why then say the scribes that Elias must first come? And Jesus answered and said unto them, Elias truly shall first come, and restore all things. But I say unto you that Elias is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed. . . . Then, the disciples understood that he spoke unto them of John, the Baptist' (Matt. 17:10–13). 'If ye will receive it, this is Elias which was for to come' (Matt. 11:14). And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias . . . (Luke 1:17). Thus, Jesus made it clear that a second coming of one who has passed away means the coming of someone in his power and spirit.

Another aspect of this almost universal expectation of the second advent in the latter days of a great teacher is what would be the message and function of that teacher. Such an

advent has been prophecied in almost all the principal faiths that flourish today upon the earth. Would the message and function of every one of them be identical or would each of them have his own message different from and in conflict with the messages of the other great teachers in their second advent? If the messages of all of them are to be identical then not more than one would be needed to convey that message and to set an example in conformity with it. If the messages are to be different and conflicting, the advent of so many teachers instead of promoting unity, peace, accord, and spiritual fulfilment, would only foster hostility, discord, enmity, and chaos.

Mankind has, during the last two centuries or so, been pressing forward towards a unity of aim and purpose, and all the developments that have taken place towards bringing different sections into closer relations with each other afford the strongest indication that the teacher of the latter days would be a single person and that there would not be a plurality of personages.

The situation today is that while the children of Israel are still awaiting the advent of the Messiah, the Christians are looking forward to an early second coming of Jesus, the first Messiah, and the Muslims have for nearly a century awaited the appearance of the Mahdi and Messiah, whose advent had been prophesied by the Holy Prophet of Islam.

Indeed, the Holy Quran sets forth a second spiritual advent of the Holy Prophet himself in the latter days: 'Among others from among them who have not yet joined them. He is the Mighty, the Wise. That is God's grace; He bestows it on whom He pleases. God is the Master of immense grace' (62:4–5).

It is agreed among the Muslims that the prophecy: 'He it is Who sent His Messenger with guidance and the Religion of Truth, that he may make it prevail over every other

religion, even though those who associate partners with God may dislike it' (9:33); will be fulfilled through the advent of the Prophet of the latter days, that is to say, the Mahdi and the Promised Messiah.

1. There is a very strong presumption that the great teacher of the latter days would appear within the dispensation of Islam. This presumption is upheld by many factors, into a detailed exposition of which we are not called upon to enter here. It would be enough to mention only some of the outstanding ones. The first is that the scripture of Islam, the Holy Quaran, proclaims the universality of the mission of the Holy Prophet. 'Proclaim, O Prophet: O mankind, verily I am God's Messenger to you all' (7:159). 'We have sent thee as a bearer of glad tidings and a Warner for the whole of mankind, but most people know not' (34:29). 'We have sent thee only as a mercy for the universe' (21:108).

2. The scripture of Islam, the Holy Quran, contains comprehensive guidance for the whole of mankind for all time, as is said: 'A Messenger from God, reciting pure scriptures, wherein are lasting commandments' (98:4). 'The Quran is a source of honour for all the worlds' (68:53). 'Blessed is He Who has sent down the Discriminating Book to His servant that he may be a Warner to all the peoples' (25:2).

3. The Quran is the only scripture which has been safeguarded against perversion under divine decree, as is said: 'Surely, We Ourself have sent down this Exhortation, and We will, most surely, safeguard it' (15:10). The Quran has the unique distinction that of all the scriptures it is, from beginning to end, entirely verbal revelation. That in itself is a guarantee that it would not be perverted or twisted. All non-Muslim scholars who have made a research into the integrity of the text of the Holy Quran are agreed that it is an exact and accurate version of the verbal revelation that

Muhammad, the Prophet of Islam, claimed God had vouchsafed to him. But the divine guarantee of safeguarding the Quran, that has just been set out, is not confined to preserving the integrity of the text alone. It extends to all the factors that bear upon the preservation of the Quran as the perfect source of divine guidance for the whole of mankind for all time. For instance, it is a guarantee that the language in which it was revealed, namely classical Arabic, would always continue a living language in current use all the time, so that no difficulty might be encountered in determining and comprehending the meaning of the Quran. Classical Arabic is today spoken and written over a much vaster area of the earth and by many hundred times the number of people than was the case when the Quran was revealed. Besides, the Holy Prophet predicted that at the beginning of every century God Almighty would raise someone from among his followers who would set forth from the Quran the guidance that may be needed by mankind from time to time. In the case of no other scriptures has the integrity of its text, its language and its guidance been maintained.

4. There is the promise contained in the Quran, that in the latter days a prophet would be raised in Islam who would not only defend Islam against the concerted attacks of the followers and exponents of other faiths but would establish the superiority of Islam in every respect over all other religions, as is said: 'He it is Who sent His Messenger with guidance and the religion of Truth, that he may make it prevail over every other religion, even though those who associate partners with Allah may dislike it' (9:33). The commentators of the Quran are agreed that the promise contained in this verse would be fulfilled through the Mahdi and the Messiah, whose advent in the latter days had been prophesied by the Holy Prophet. He would be a spiritual

reflection of the Holy Prophet himself, as is indicated in 62:4.

5. Islam is the only faith that requires belief in all the Prophets wherever and whenever they might have appeared. The Quran affirms: 'Verily, We have sent thee with enduring truth, as a bearer of glad tidings and as a Warner; and there is no people to whom a Warner has not been sent' (35:25). Even more explicitly are the Muslims commanded: 'Affirm; We believe in God and in that which has been sent down to us and that which was sent down to Abraham and Ishmael and Isaac and Jacob and his children and that which was given to Moses and Jesus, and that which was given to all other Prophets from their Lord. We make no discrimination between any of them and to Him do we wholly submit ourselves' (2:137). This again is a sure indication that the great teacher who is to appear in the latter days must appear in the dispensation of Islam as he would then be a believer in the righteousness of all the Prophets and would not deny or reject any of them. If he were to appear in any other dispensation he would not be acceptable to those whose Prophets be denied or rejected. He must be the champion of God in the mantles of all the Prophets.

6. It is obvious that the great teacher, whose advent in the latter days had been foretold in every one of the principal revealed religions of the world, would be divinely guided, that is to say, he would be the recipient of divine revelation. This is also an important factor that would persuade a seeker after truth to determine that the promised teacher must appear within the dispensation of Islam, inasmuch as the door of divine revelation has long been closed in all faiths other than Islam, and the followers of all those faiths hold firmly to the notion that divine revelation is no longer possible. Thus, the advent of a divinely inspired teacher is possible only in Islam.

There has also been agreement among the Muslims that the Mahdi-Messiah would appear at the beginning of the fourteenth century of the Hegira, corresponding roughly to the last decade of the nineteenth century of the Christian era. Among several Christian denominations the end of the nineteent hand beginning of the twentieth century was also considered as the time of the second coming of Jesus.

In the beginning of the year 1889 of the Christian era, Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian, India, who had been a recipient of divine revelation over a number of years, announced that it had been revealed to him by the Divine that he was the Promised Mahdi whose advent had been prophecied by the Prophet of Islam. The Holy Prophet had also pointed out that the Mahdi and Messiah would be the same person.

The announcement of Hazrat Ahmad aroused bitter resentment among Muslims and non-Muslims alike and attracted great hostility. Up to then he had been a greatly revered personality among the Muslims because of his outstanding service to the cause of Islam through his writings, particularly his monumental work, the Braheen Ahmadiyya, which was acclaimed by the Muslims as an epoch-making exposition of basic Islamic principles as set forth in the Quran. Some of the divines and other leading personalities among the Muslims who had employed superlative terms in praising the Braheen Ahmadiyya, now turned against him and condemned him in even stronger terms. Leading divines pronounced him a disbeliever, outside the pale of Islam, and some went so far as to declare that his assassination would be a meritorious act.

Simultaneously with the announcement of his claim Hazrat Ahmad laid the foundations of a religious community, bound to him in spiritual allegiance, which became known

under his direction, as the Ahmadiyya Community, and the Movement that he initiated became known as the Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam. On the day that he appointed for the first initiation into the Movement as many as three hundred and thirteen sincere and pious Muslims joined the Movement by making the covenant of spiritual allegiance to him. The current of opposition and hostility was now directed not only towards the Founder of the Movement, but also towards every member of the Movement. They were all pronounced disbelievers, outside the pale of Islam, and a campaign of bitter persecution was unleashed against them. It is not necessary for our present purpose to make a detailed exposition of all the pain and suffering that was inflicted upon them. They faced whatever came with steadfastness, and under the directions of their leader occupied themselves with measures of self-improvement, deepening their righteousness, intensifying their consciousness of the Divine, strengthening their communion with Him and moulding their lives into wholly beneficent patterns. Their principal means for the achievement of these purposes became sincere, humble and earnest supplication to the Divine.

The pivot of the opposition and hostility encountered by the Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement on the part of the vast body of orthodox Muslims became his claim to be the Promised Messiah. Contrary to the clear affirmations of the Quran that Jesus had died a natural death long after the event of the crucifixion, they held fast to the erroneous belief that Jesus had, just before his crucifixion, been supernaturally raised to heaven in his physical body and would descend to earth in that physical body some time in the latter days. Indeed, they were awaiting his physical descent about the time when the Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement announced his claim of being the Promised Messiah. In their

estimation his claim was preposterous as they could not understand how the Messiah who was sojourning with his physical body in heaven could suddenly reveal himself in the person of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, whom they had known since his birth (1835) as one of themselves with no supernatural pretensions whatever. Thus, the question whether Jesus had died a natural death long after the event of the crucifixion or had ascended bodily to heaven, without having suffered any kind of death, and was awaiting his physical descent to earth, became the subject of fierce controversy between Hazrat Ahmad and the orthodox divines opposed to him.

The opposition to the Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement was intensified by his claim that while he was a devoted follower of the Holy Prophet and believed that no one who was not a devoted follower of that Chief among the Prophets could be bestowed the status of a prophet, yet such status might, in the wisdom of God Almighty, be bestowed by way of reflection upon a truly righteous Muslim, who was so devoted to the Holy Prophet as to lose his own spiritual identity in that of the Holy Prophet, and that he himself was such a person who, by the sheer grace of God and through the spiritual grace of the Holy Prophet, had been bestowed that status. This was anathema to the vast body of orthodox Muslims, who believed that there was no possibility of any kind of prophethood continuing after the Holy Prophet, and yet in the same breath held that Jesus on his descent to earth would have the status of a prophet.

Hazrat Ahmad put forward conclusive arguments from the Quran and the pronouncements of the Holy Prophet in support of the validity of his claim and though the membership of his Movement continued to increase steadily, the hostility of the great body of orthodox Islam was in no wise

assuaged. It is not our purpose to pursue an academic exposition of the doctrinal differences that divided the Founder and members of the Ahmadiyya Movement from the mass of orthodox Muslims and set them apart from each other. It would, however, be helpful if we were to set out briefly some factors that would assist a seeker after truth to appraise the claim of Hazrat Ahmad.

The Holy Prophet had indicated a very clear sign of the appearance of the Mahdi which it was not in the power of any person to manufacture or improvise. Darqutni, an eminent and recognised authority on *hadees* (sayings of the Holy Prophet), has recorded that the Holy Prophet said: 'For our Mahdi there are appointed two signs which have never been manifested for any other claimant since the creation of the heavens and the earth. They are that at his advent there shall occur an eclipse of the moon on the first of its appointed nights and an eclipse of the sun on the middle of its appointed days, and both will occur in the same month of Ramadhan.'

Now this is a celestial phenomenon which can only manifest itself according to the divine law governing the movements of celestial bodies and no one can either contrive it, or hasten or delay its manifestation. If this occurrence was to happen at all it could happen only on its predetermined dates. If Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad had announced his claim after the manifestation of this phenomenon it might have been thought that he had been influenced by that manifestation to put forward his claim. But the striking fact is that this concurrence not only happened on dates which conformed exactly with the prediction of the Holy Prophet, but that it happened almost exactly five years after the announcement of his claim by Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad.

The eclipse of the moon normally occurs on the 13th, 14th or 15th night of a lunar month, and the eclipse of the sun on the 27th, 28th or 29th of the lunar month. The sign mentioned by the Holy Prophet, therefore, was that the moon would be eclipsed on the 13th night of a lunar month, and the eclipse of the sun on the 28th of the same lunar month, which will be the month of Ramadhan. This sign was to appear after and not before the advent of the Mahdi. It so happened that an eclipse of the moon occurred on Thursday night, the 13th of Ramadhan, 1311 Hegira (21 March 1894) and the eclipse of the sun occurred on the 28th of the same month of Ramadhan (6 April 1894), in exact accord with the prophecy of the Holy Prophet. The same phenomenon was repeated in the U.S.A. in 1895. This was an astonishing concatenation which not only was strong proof of the claim of Hazrat Ahmad but confirmed, in an extraordinary manner, the righteousness of the Holy Prophet himself who had predicted it. This manifestation attracted the attention of many truth loving people to Hazrat Ahmad and several of them joined his Movement under its impact.

As the Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement claimed, *inter alia*, that he was a spiritual reflection of the Holy Prophet, it would be relevant to test his claim by some of the standards that have been laid down in the Quran as guides for determining the truth of the Holy Prophet. One of these is: 'Had God so willed, I would not have recited the Quran to you nor would He have made it known to you. I have spent a whole lifetime among you before this. Will you not then understand' (10:17)? This meant that God Almighty invited the attention of those who questioned the truth of the Holy Prophet to his life before the divine call came to him. He had led an absolutely blameless and pure life and had never been guilty of a single falsehood, so much

so that his contemporaries had bestowed upon him the title of al-Ameen, meaning, the one trustworthy. Such a one who had never uttered a lie against man would not suddenly start manufacturing lies against God and claiming that God spoke to him if in fact He did not speak to him. The unanimous testimony of his contemporaries was that Muhammad had never been guilty of falsehood.

The life of the Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement, before he put forward his claim, was equally blameless and praiseworthy. This is borne out by the testimony of those who knew him in his younger days.

It is well established that from his early youth he was devoted to the study and practice of the eternal verities and that the entire purpose of his life had been to win the pleasure of God. In his daily life he set an example of the highest moral virtues. Even at the height of the opposition to him after he had announced his claim, his bitterest enemies were not able to point to the slightest blemish in his personal life before and after his claim.

Another test is that God reveals that much of the unseen as He wills to His Messengers, as is said: 'He is the Knower of the unseen; and He reveals not the hidden to anyone, except to him whom He chooses from among His Messengers' (72:27–8). This means that God communicates to a prophet as much of that which is hidden as He wills. In other words, the truth of a claimant to prophethood might be judged from the prophecies that he makes on the basis of the knowledge of the hidden that God bestows upon him. Those prophecies are not the vague and uncertain predictions of astrologers and soothsayers but possess a majesty and a certainty which distinguishes them clearly from mere conjecture and prognostication.

The Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement made many

prophecies, a large number of which found fulfilment during his lifetime according to their tenor and many of which have found their fulfilment since his death, at their proper time. Some of them relate to the future and are either in the course of fulfilment or await fulfilment. It would take several volumes to set them forth in any detail together with their attendant circumstances. We draw attention, by way of illustration, only to one of them which lacked the grandeur and majesty of many of his other prophecies, and yet presents many extraordinary features to a discerning eye.

One of the revelations vouchsafed to him very early was: I shall carry thy message to the ends of the earth. In the circumstances in which this revelation was conveyed to Hazrat Ahmad it sounded to his opponents as a fantastic boast. At the time he led an almost solitary life, was known to very few people, possessed very modest means and was almost entirely cut off from the rest of the world. Qadian, where he lived, was a small town in an outlying area of the Punjab, one of the backward provinces of India. It did not enjoy any of the amenities which were available to many other towns of its size. Its population did not exceed two thousand. It had a sub-post office, but no telegraph office and its nearest railway station was eleven miles distant with which it was not connected even by a metalled road. There was only an uneven dirt-track full of potholes negotiated by bullock-driven slow-moving country carts and springless one-horse contraptions which jolted along precariously and often came to grief over a pothole depositing their occupants in the heavy dust of the track, with or without serious injury. It took one of these vehicles three hours to perform the journey of eleven miles between Qadian and Batala, where the nearest telegraph office and railway station were situated.

Hazrat Ahmad though possessed of an astonishing degree

of religious knowledge and high proficiency in Arabic, Persian, and Urdu had little familiarity with English or any other western language. His claim was resented and vehemently repudiated by the representatives and followers of all religions, including Islam. It will thus be appreciated that situated as he was, when he received the revelation that God would convey his message to the ends of the earth, there appeared to worldly eyes little chance of the revelation being fulfilled. Yet, to the bewilderment and chagrin of his opponents, the revelation has found striking and astonishing fulfilment.

There are today hundreds of Ahmadiyya Missions scattered all over the globe that are occupied round the clock with conveying the message and teachings of Hazrat Ahmad to the people among whom they carry on their work. Branches of the Movement are now established in almost every part of the earth. The Movement comprises not only large communities in most countries of Asia and Africa but also small communities in several countries of Europe and America. The number of adherents of the Movement now exceeds ten million and is daily on the increase. All this could not have been achieved through any contrivance or device of the Founder of the Movement, were it not that such was the divine purpose which had been revealed to him in the very early days of his ministry and which was bound to be fulfilled despite all the efforts of his opponents to frustrate it. Opposition to the Movement and persecution of and discrimination against its members continue in many parts of the world but even these become, in a strange way, the instruments of the propagation and spread of the Movement.

One feature that characterises the spread of the Movement is that a very large number of those who continue to join

and identify themselves with the Movement in the face of all the opposition and threatened persecution, are moved to do so through their dreams and visions which bring them sure conviction and afford them satisfaction. This kind of experience is the result of prayers and supplications for guidance. It is an illustration of the fulfilment of the divine promise held out in the Quran: 'We will surely guide in Our ways those who strive after Us' (29:70).

The Holy Prophet was promised security by God against the devices and machinations of his enemies, as is set out in the Quran: 'O Messenger, proclaim widely that which has been sent down to thee from thy Lord; for if thou do it not, thou will not have conveyed His message at all. God will safeguard thee against harm by people' (5:68). The whole world knows that he was miraculously guarded all through his life; though his enemies tried every kind of stratagem to destroy him all their efforts were completely frustrated.

Hazrat Ahmad also had received the divine promise: God will safeguard thee against harm by people; and in his case also the divine guarantee was completely fulfilled, though he possessed no means to ensure his own security against the devices of his opponents. He was all the time exposed to danger and his assassination could have been very easily compassed with impunity.

As a contrast to the divine promise of security for the Holy Prophet mentioned in the Quran, there is an awesome divine warning against an impostor: 'Had he fabricated any saying and attributed it to Us, We would surely have seized him by the right hand, and then surely We would have severed his large artery, and no one of you could have kept Us from it' (69:45–9). This means that God would not let an impostor flourish and would surely destroy him. Commentators on the Holy Quran have all been agreed that these verses in

effect pronounce a sentence of ruin against anyone who falsely claims to be a recipient of divine revelation and persists in his claim over a period of twenty-three years, which was the period of the Holy Prophet's ministry.

Hazrat Ahmad had been a recipient of revelation and had put himself forward as such even before the publication of Braheen Ahmadiyya, and long before his claim of being the Mahdi-Messiah. He persisted in his claim of being a recipient of divine revelation for well over thirty years, during which period he continued to receive divine support and protection, so that his life furnished a surprising spectacle of triumph after triumph bestowed upon him by divine grace.

There is divine testimony in the Holy Quran that the Holy Prophet possessed the highest moral excellences (68:5). In this respect also Hazrat Ahmad was a reflection of the Holy Prophet and his life illustrated the highest moral standards in every respect.

His love of and devotion to God and the Holy Prophet are evidenced in every page of his writings and every paragraph of the report of his talks and dialogues, and were reflected in the mirror of his daily conduct. He stated in a Persian verse: 'Next to the love of God I am intoxicated with the love of Muhammad; if this amounts to disbelief, then God is my witness that I am a great disbeliever.'

His love of the Holy Quran was so well known and was so fervently expressed that one of his bitter opponents often recited his verses in praise of the Quran in his own public addresses.

He proved himself a great champion of Islam and effectively established its superiority in every respect over all other faiths. He issued challenge after challenge to the representatives of other faiths in support of his claim of the superiority of Islam but none of them dared to take them up.

He founded a community, the members of which have

made it unique in respect of their living faith in their Creator and in making the winning of His pleasure the motive and purpose of their lives, at a time when the general trend, particularly among the so-called advanced peoples, is to turn away from God and to repudiate Him.

In one of his revelations he was designated the Champion of God in the mantles of the prophets, and every moment of his life justified that designation. At the time of his advent Islam appeared to be fighting a rear-guard action against the assaults of all the other faiths, more particularly of Christianity, especially in India, where the Christian missionaries carried on a most offensive campaign against Islam in which they made subtle use of the prestige then enjoyed by the British, and thus Christian, government of India. Once, however, Hazrat Ahmad embarked upon the defence of Islam on the basis of the Holy Quran, the exuberance of Christian missionaries soon began to subside and they were forced to adopt an attitude of defence of their own beliefs and doctrines. Hazrat Ahmad's successful championship of Islam was acknowledged even by some of his bitterest opponents.

Jesus had indicated that the signs of his second coming would be earthquakes, plagues, epidemics, wars and rumors of wars, etc. All these signs have been manifested, which means that the second advent of Jesus has come about in the person of someone who came in the power and spirit of Jesus. The Muslims were looking forward to the advent of the Mahdi-Messiah in the beginning of the fourteenth century of the Islamic era. That century is now drawing to a close; the Mahdi-Messiah must have appeared at its beginning. Hazrat Ahmad was the only one who claimed that the prophecies predicting the appearance of a divinely inspired teacher in the latter days had been fulfilled in his advent.

The Holy Prophet had defined the functions of Mahdi-Messiah, as the revivial of the faith of Islam, the establishment and strengthening of the law of Islam, the spread of virtue, the suppression of vice, and the exposition of the myth of the death of Jesus upon the cross. By the time of his demise in 1908 he had set in motion such strong currents aimed at the achievement of every one of these objectives that the remarkable success already resulting therefrom guaranteed their progressive and full consummation in the coming years.

Thus, his advent fulfilled all the prophecies with regard to the appearance of a great divinely inspired teacher in the latter days.

While in his writings and speeches he set forth a comparative exposition of the weakness of the doctrines and teachings of every one of the great faiths that flourished in his time, wherever they differed from the teachings of Islam, his analysis and exposition of the then current doctrines and teachings of the Christian Church was devastating and shattering. As early as 1890 he had announced that Jesus did not die on the cross and in 1899 he published a book: *Jesus in India*, which is a thesis on the subject of the deliverance of Jesus from death on the cross and his journey thereafter through the countries in which the lost tribes of Israel were scattered and his final sojourn and death in Kashmir. The publication of this book created a great stir in religious circles and came as a severe shock to the Christian church. It aroused a great clamour and the thesis that it set forth was contemptuously ridiculed by Christian missionaries. Hazrat Ahmad maintained that his thesis had been divinely inspired and now that it had been set forth publicly, God, in His wisdom, would bring to light historical evidence to prove the correctness of the conclusions set forth in the thesis. It is true that eminent writers on the life of Jesus had already

expressed grave doubts concerning the expiry of Jesus on the cross, but no one had set forth the deliverance of Jesus from the cross with such definiteness and certainty as was done by Hazrat Ahmad. Further, he was the first person, so far as is known, who threw light upon the post-crucifixion life of Jesus and traced his journey through the countries in which some of the lost tribes of Israel were to be found and made the definite statement that Jesus had died in Kashmir and was buried in the Khanyar quarter of Srinagar, where his tomb may still be visited.

Once it is established that Jesus did not die upon the cross, there was no accursed death, no bearing of the sins of mankind, no resurrection, no ascension and no atonement. The entire structure of church theology is thereby demolished. Paul, who was the real founder of church Christianity, said: 'For I deliver unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the Scriptures. . . . And if Christ is not risen, then is our preaching vain and your faith is also vain (I Cor., 15:3–4, 14).

The late Dr. S. M. Zwemer, the well-known American missionary declared: 'If our belief in the death of Christ on the cross is wrong then the whole of Christianity is a farce.'

# 8

# POST-CRUCIFIXION

The life of Jesus after the event of the crucifixion continues to be shrouded in mystery. Such information as has so far become available indicates that departing from Judaea, he travelled north and might have visited Damascus. At some point he headed east and among other places stopped at Nasibain (Nasibus), a short distance from Mosul. He entered Iran and gradually made his way into Afghanistan by way of Herat. From Afghanistan, he appears to have travelled to India and eventually settled down in Kashmir. There is evidence that he might have visited some places in Tibet.

It seems that along his route of travel people believed in him. There is a whole mass of tradition and a certain amount of definite evidence that he found general acceptance among the people of Kashmir. It is certain that he died there at an advanced age. His tomb in the Khanyar quarter of Srinagar has now become well known and continues to attract many visitors, among them scholars, historians, archaeologists, and persons of such eminence as the late Lord Halifax who, during his official visit to Kashmir, as Viceroy of India, took time to go and have a look at the reputed tomb of the Prince Prophet Yuz Asaph.

It is well known that there was a large Jewish community in and around Damascus which might have attracted the visit of Jesus at the commencement of his journey to the lands in which the lost tribes of Israel were then to be found.

Jesus, finding he could no longer remain with safety in Galilee, started on his journey to visit the lost tribes of Israel

in the East, via Damascus, where he remained a considerable time, long enough to make disciples of Ananias and others. This may have been the reason why the Commission was sent by the Jewish authorities to carry out persecutions there. Jesus, knowing of this approach, went out like Elijah of old, to meet his enemy Saul, the result of his wonderful personal power being the conversion of the persecutor into a disciple. The intercourse between them probably continued for some days in the house of Ananias, or wherever Jesus was residing. The arrival of the Commission, however, showed Jesus that it was no longer safe for him to remain in Damascus, and he proceeded towards Babylon on his way to the East.[1]

At p. 324 of Vol. III of his works, Josephus mentions a Jewish Community in the city of Nasibus. He says:

> Now the whole nation of the Jews was in fear both of the Babylonians and of the Seleucians because all the Syrians that lived in those places agreed with the Seleucians to war against the Jews, so most of them gathered together and went to Naarda and Nasibus, and obtained security there from the strength of those cities and also their inhabitants who were a great many, and were all warlike men.[2]

The Encyclopaedia Britannica, eleventh and fourteenth editions, mention: Nisbis (Nasibina in the Assyrian description), modern Nezib or Nasibin, is an ancient city and fortress in the north of Mesopotamia, near the point where the Mygdonians (modern Jaghjagha) leaves the mountain by a narrow defile. It consists of some 4,000 inhabitants, largely Jews.

1. Doker, Ernest Brougham, District Court Judge, Sydney, *If Jesus did not Die upon the Cross*, pp. 75–6.

2. *The Works of Flavius Josephus*, Whiston's translation with notes by Sir C. W. Wilson, London, 1887.

Cyrus the Great of Persia is greatly revered among the Jews because of his deliverance of the Israelites from their captivity and the restoration of some of them to Judaea. A large number of them, however, settled in Iran and it was, therefore, natural for Jesus to journey through Iran to convey his message to the Jewish settlements in that country.

That during the course of his journey eastwards, Jesus passed through Herat, a town near the border of Afghanistan with Iran, appears, from a brief account of a community in the environs of Herat who are followers of Jesus, in the book *Among the Dervishes*, where it is stated:

The followers of Isa, son of Maryam – Jesus the son of Mary – generally call themselve Moslems and inhabit a number of villages scattered throughout the Western area of Afghanistan whose centre is Herat. I had heard of them several times, but considered that they were probably people who had been converted by European missionaries from Eastern Persia, or else that they were a relic of the time when Herat had been a flourishing bishopric of the Nestorian rite, before the Arabs conquered Persia in the seventh and eighth centuries, But, from their own accounts and what I could observe, they seemed to come from some much older source. . . .

. . . There must be about a thousand of these Christians. Their chief is the Abba Yahiyya (Father John), who can recite the succession of teachers through nearly sixty generations to Isa, son of Mary, of Nazara, the Kashmiri.

According to these people, Jesus escaped from the cross, was hidden by friends, was helped to flee to India, . . . and settled in Kashmir, where he is revered as an ancient teacher, Yuz Asaf. It is from this period of the supposed life of Jesus that these people claim to have got their message.

I had several conversations with the Abba; though, not unnaturally if his story was true, there were few points on Christian doctrine, as we know it today, that he could recognise.

The Abba lived on a farm, and like all the Christians says that their teacher stipulated that his followers should always have a worldly vocation. Jesus, according to this community, was a carpenter and also a shepherd.

. . . . . .

The Traditions of the Messiah (anointed one) is the holy book of the community. They do not believe in the New Testament, or, rather, they say that these Traditions are the New Testament, and that the Gospels which we have are partly true but generally written by people who did not understand the teachings of the Master.

The Abba Yahiyya, a towering figure with the face of a saint, was certainly an erudite man, and he knew his own scriptures, plus a great deal of the Jewish writings, very well indeed. He had heard of the teachings of the heretics, as he called what we would call various sects of Christians known to us; and he wanted no part of them.

My son, he said, in his softly accented Persian, these people are reading and repeating a part of the story. They have completely misunderstood the message. We have the story told us by the Master, and through him we will be saved and made whole. Some of the events in that document which you call the Bible are true, but a great deal is made up or imagined or put in for less than worthy reasons. Isa lived for over thirty years after the materials you have were completed, and he told us what was true.

Briefly, the doctrine is that Jesus was the son of God because he had attained that rank through his goodness and sacrifice. Thus he was equal to a divine person. He came after John, the Baptist, who himself had reached the highest degree of development possible at that time. John baptised with water, Jesus with spirit and fire. These were the three stages of understanding, which were taught by our Christians.

. . . . . .

While it is possible to consider these people as mere heretics . . .

yet, I was singularly impressed by their piety, their feeling of certainty, their simplicity and lack of the unpleasant forms of fervour which one often finds in minority cults. They were convinced, too, that the day would come when the world would discover the truth about Jesus. When this took place it would be the mission of the Followers to come out into the open and teach those who wanted to believe in Jesus the method by which a man or woman could enter the kingdom.[3]

The Afghans claim that they are the descendants of some of the lost tribes of Israel and there is a strong tradition among them to that effect. Their features certainly support their claim and so do several of the names of their tribes: for instance, Musa Khel (the tribe of Moses), Yusuf Zai (the tribe of Joseph), Daud Khel (the tribe of David), and Sulaiman Zai (the tribe of Solomon). One of their mountain peaks is called Koh-i-Sulaiman (the mount of Solomon). The capital of the country is named Kabul and it is situated along a river of the same name which is obviously a reminder of Cabul in I Kings 9:13. This, however, is not a solitary instance of a Biblical name in use in Afghanistan; there are others. For instance, a town along the Indus is named Zaida, which is reminiscent of Zidon in Judges 18:28, and there is Hazara, which is a reminder of Hazeroth in Numbers 11:35. There is no doubt that if a thorough research were carried out several other such instances might be discovered. Evidence of the identity or close resemblance of tribal and place names is a very strong indication that the people who adopted these names, or attached them to their cities, did it out of nostalgic memories of their past association with them.

Sir Henry Yale, K.C.S.I., says:

3. *Among the Dervishes* by O. M. Burke, The Octagon Press Ltd., London.

The Afghan chroniclers call their people Bani Israel and claim descent from King Saul through a son whom they ascribe to him called Jeremiah, who had a son called Afghanna. The numerous stock of Afghanna were removed by Nebuchadnezzar and found their way to the mountains of Ghor and Feroza east and north of Herat.

According to their own tradition, they believe themselves descended from the Jews; and in a history of the Afghans, written in the 16th century, and lately translated from the Persian, they are derived from Afghan, the son of Eremin, the son of Saul, King of Israel, whose posterity being carried away at the time of the captivity, was settled by the conqueror in the mountains of Ghor, Cabul, Candhar, and Ghazni. They preserved the purity of their religion until they embraced Islam.[4]

From various conversations with Afghana in Khorassaun, I learnt that some of them are proud of an origin from the children of Israel.[5]

I obtained a passport from the king after this most interesting sojourn and then crossed the Oxus and arrived after a few days at Balkh and from that city where I also communed with the dispersed of Israel, I proceeded to Muzaur.

Some Afghans claimed a descent from Israel. According to them, Afghana was the nephew of Asaph, the son of Berachia, who built the temple of Solomon. The descendants of this Affghaun being Jews, were carried into Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar, from whence they were removed to the mountains of Ghoree in Afghanistan, but in the time of Muhammad turned Muhammedans.[6]

Hence I passed to Peshawar. Here I had also the singular book read to me of the origin of the Affghan, the Pushto Book Affghan Iehann Loote. The account in this book agrees with that given in

4. *Historical and descriptive account of Persia and Afghanistan* by James B. Frazer, p. 298; New York, 1843.

5. *Narratives of a Mission to Bokhara in the years 1843–1845*, in two volumes, by Rev. Joseph Wolff, D.D., LL.D. Published by John W. Parker, West Strand, London, 1845. Vol. 1, p. 9.

the MSS, Teemur Nameh and Ketaub Ansbee Muhakkek Toose. I thought the general physiogomy not Jewish, but I was wonderfully struck with the resemblance that the Youssufszeye and Khalibaree, two of the tribes, bare to the Jews.

The Kaffreseeah Poosh, if Affghan, vary widely from the rest of their nation.[7]

I always thought the Kaffr Seeah Poosh were descendants of Israel and some of the learned Jews of Samarcand are of my opinion.[8]

I spent six days with the children of Rachab (Bani Arbal). With them were children of Israel of the tribe of Dan, who reside near Terim in Hatramawl, who expect, in common with the children of Rachab, the speedy arrival of the Messiah in the clouds of Heaven.[9]

The traditions of the people refer them to Syria as the country of their residence at the time they were carried away into captivity by Nebuchadnezzar and planted as colonists in different parts of Persia and Media. From these positions they immigrated Eastward at some subsequent period into the mountainous countries of Ghor, where they were called by the neighbouring peoples Bani Afghan or Bani Israel. In corroboration of this we have the testimony of the prophet Edras to the effect that the ten tribes of Israel who were carried into captivity, subsequently escaped and found refuge in the country of Arsreth, which is supposed to be identical with the Hazara country of the present day of which Ghor forms a part. It is also stated in the Tabcati Nasari that in the time of a native Shan Sabi dynasty there was a people called Bani Israel in that country and that some of them were extensively engaged in trade with the countries around.[10]

We are attracted at once to a country of vast importance in the present aspect of the East, and the more interesting to us as we find there a people who profess to be the Bani Israel or

6. ibid, p. 16. 7. ibid, p. 17. 8. ibid, p. 18. 9. ibid, p. 58.

10. *The Races of Afghanistan* by H. W. Bellews, Thacker Spink & Co., Calcutta, 1884.

descendants of the Ten Tribes, namely Afghanistan and the adjacent countries.[11]

The prominent reasons for thinking that certain classes of the people of Bokhara and Afghanistan are of Israelitish origin are these:

1st. Their personal resemblance to the Hebrew family. Thus Dr. Wolff, the Jewish missionary says: 'I was wonderfully struck with the resemblance of the Youssoufszye (tribe of Joseph), and the Khybere, two of their tribes, to Jews'. Moorcroft also says of Khyberis: 'They are tall and of singularly Jewish cast of features'.

2nd. They have been named by themselves Bani Israel, children of Israel, from time immemorial.

3rd. The names of their tribes are Israelitish, especially that of Joseph.

4th. The Hebrew names of places and persons in Afghanistan are of far greater frequency than can be accounted for through Mahometan association and, indeed, these names existed before the Afghans became Mohametans.

5th. All accounts agree that they inhabited the mountains of Ghore from a very remote antiquity. It is certain that the Princes of Ghore belonged to the Afghan tribe of Sooree and that their dynasty was allowed to be of very great antiquity even in the 11th century.

6th. Afghan is the name given to their nation by others. The name they give their nation is Pushtoon, and Drs. Garey and Marshman assert that the Pushtoon language has more Hebrew roots than any other.[12]

The antiquity of the name of the country Cabul, or Cabool is then established; and it is also shown that some peculiar people known as The Tribes, The Noble Tribes, dwelt there at a very remote period. There is, therefore, good evidence that the present inhabitants of Cabul may be justified in asserting that from the earliest period of history they and their ancestors have occupied Cabul, and that from time immemorial they have been known

11. *The Lost Tribes* by George Moore, M.D., London, 1886, pp. 143–60.

as The Tribes. That is to say, Israelitish Tribes, such as they now assumed themselves to be. According to Sir W. Jones the West Persian authorities agree with them in their account of their origin; and resident and competent authorities, such as Sir John Malcolm and the missionary Mr. Chamberlain, after full investigation, assure us that many of the Afghans are undoubtedly of the seed of Abraham.[13]

When Nadir Shah, marching to the conquest of India, arrived at Peshawar, the Chief of the tribe of Yoazoof Zyes presented him with a Bible written in Hebrew and several other articles that had been used in their ancient worship and which they had preserved. These articles were at once recognised by the Jews who followed the camp.[14]

Modern investigations have pointed to the historians and latterly with almost convincing evidence (so far as such is possible) to the Afghans, as descended from the lost tribes.[15]

There can, therefore, be little doubt that some at least of the lost tribes of Israel had been settled in different parts of Afghanistan for a long time before the event of the Crucifixion and that Jesus visited them and preached to them and was accepted by them.

From Afghanistan Jesus passed on to India and eventually settled down in Kashmir. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the late Prime Minister of India, himself a Kashmiri Brahmin and an ardent lover of Kashmir, has said: 'All over Central Asia, in Kashmir, and Ladakh, and Tibet, and even farther north, there is still a strong belief that Jesus, or Isa, travelled about

12. Ibid., p. 145. 13. ibid., p. 147.

14. *History of the Afghans* by L. P. Ferries, John Murray, London, 1858.

15. *The Life and Times of Jesus The Messiah*, by Dr. Alfred E. Edersheim, p. 15.

there. . . . There is nothing inherently improbable in his having done so.[16]

This is borne out by several factors. The original inhabitants of the Kashmir valley strike every one who visits Kashmir as having undoubted Jewish features. Many of their personal and several of their place names appear to have a Jewish origin. A personal name more often than not ends with Ju.

One of the high mountainous but comparatively barren provinces of Kashmir is called Gilgit which is reminiscent of Golgotha in Matt. 27:33. Hims, a town near Ladakh, is a reminder of Hamath in Numbers 13:21. Ladakh itself is recognisable as Laadah in 1 Chr. 4:21.

The possibility of Jesus having visted Tibet is indicated by Tibbath in 1 Chr 18:8, and Leh is almost identical with Leni in Judges 15:9.

On entering the Kingdom after crossing the Pir Penjale mountains the inhabitants in the frontier villages struck me as resembling Jews. Their countenance and manner, and that indescribable peculiarity which enables a traveller to distinguish the inhabitants of different nations all seemed to belong to that ancient people. You are not to ascribe what I say to mere fancy, the Jewish appearance of these villagers having been remarked by our Jesuit Father and by several other Europeans long before I visited Kashmere.[17]

The visitor with an ordinary standard of beauty, as he passes along the river or the roads or streets, does see a great many more than one or two really beautiful women. He will often see

16. *Glimpses of World History* by Jawaharlal Nehru, 2nd Ed., Bombay, 1962.

17. *Travels in the Mughul Empire* by François Bernier, translated by Archibald Constable, 1891, Oxford University Press, 1919, p. 413.

strikingly handsome women, with clear cut eyebrows, and a general Jewish appearance.[18]

Other interesting Jewish types of Kashmir Mohammedans are found among the headmen of the picturesque little hamlets along the foothills. Here may be seen fine old patriarchal types, just as we picture to ourselves the Israelitish heroes of old.[19]

When the people are in appearance of such decided Jewish cast it is curious that such a theory should exist, and certainly, as I have said, there are real Biblical types to be seen everywhere in Kashmir, and especially among the upland villages. Here the Israelitish shepherd tending his flock and herds many any day be seen.[20]

On first seeing the Kashmirians in their own country I imagined from their garb, the cast of their countenance which was long and of a grave aspect and the forms of their beard, that I had come across a nation of Jews.[21]

Immensely strong are those picturesque, broad-shouldered Kashmiri peasants, and yet docile and meek in temperament. One thing about them strikes you with enormous force. They seem more perfectly Jewish than the present Jews you have ever seen – not because they wear a flowing cloaklike dress that conforms to your ideas of Biblical garments, but because their faces have the Jewish cast of features. The curious coincidence – or is it a coincidence? – is that there is a strong tradition in Kashmir of connection with Jews. For a good many years there have been afloat in this land rumors that Christ did not really die upon the cross, but was let down and disappeared to seek the lost tribes, and that he came to Kashmir, Ladak and Little Tibet and died and was buried at Srinagar. Kashmir legend, I have been told, contains references to a prophet who lived here and taught, as

18. Sir Francis Younghusband, *Kashmir*, Adam and Charles Black, London, 1911, p. 125.

19. Ibid., p. 129. 20. Ibid., p. 130.

21. George Forster, *Letters on a journey from Bengal to England*, Vol. II, R. Faulder, London 1808, p. 20.

Jesus did, by parables – little stories that are repeated in Kashmir to the present day. Of recent years certain explorers have also come upon traces of this story of sojourn of Jesus in these regions.[22]

There is an old tradition that the Jews who were led captive by Scalmaneser settled in Cashmere and the people of that country are the descendants of those Jews. It is certain, though we find no remains in Cashmere of the Jewish religion, the people there being all either Gentiles or Mahomedans, that there are several vestiges of a race descended from the Israelites. The air of the face, and the look of the present inhabitants, have something of what is peculiar to the Jews, which distinguishes them from all other people. Moses is a very common name there, and some ancient monuments, still to be seen, discover them to be a people come out of Israel.[23]

The natives (of Kashmir) are of a tall, robust frame of body, with manly features, the women full formed and handsome, with aquiline nose and features, resembling the Jewish,[24]

In a Sanskrit book, Bharishya Maha Purana ascribed to Vyas, said to have been written in 3191 Laukika era (115 A.D.), it is reported from Suta (Suta Uwach) that once (about 78 A.D.) Raja Shalewahin went to a peak of the Himalayas. There in the middle of the Hun country the mighty king saw sitting in the mountain a dignified person of white complexion and wearing white clothes. Shalewahin asked him who he was? He replied with pleasure: 'Know me the son of God and born of a virgin. I am the preacher of Mlachha religion and follower of true principles'. On hearing this the king said: 'what is your religion?' He replied: 'O Maharaj,

22. John Noel, 'The Heavenly High Snow Peaks of Kashmir', *Asia Magazine*, Oct. 1930.

23. Hough, James Rev., *The History of Christianity in India*, Vol. 2, p. 288.

24. Johnston, Dr. A. Keith, *Dictionary of Geography*, London, 1867, under Kashmir.

On the disappearance of truth and destruction of the traditions (*maryada*) in the Mlachha country I appeared there as Masih. Through my work the guilty and the wicked suffered, and I also suffered at their hands'. When asked to further explain his religion, he said: 'It is love, truth and purity of heart and for this I am called Masih.' Shalewahin returned after making his obeisance to him.[25]

The most striking piece of evidence in support of the life and death of Jesus in Kashmir is his tomb in the Khanyar quarter of Srinagar which is known as the tomb of the prince prophet Yuz (or Yus) Asaph.

The present custodian of the tomb holds a grant made to his ancestor Rehman Mir, son of Bahadur Mir, signed and sealed by five Muftis (Jurists) of Srinagar dated 11th Jamadi-us-Sani, 1184 A.N. (1766 A.D.). This grant shows that the holy shrine of Prophet Yuz Asaph was regularly visited by high and low. Nobles and ministers and kings and high dignitaries and the general public, came from all directions to pay their homage and made their offerings. The grant further shows that during the reign of Raja Gopadatta, Yuz Asaph came to Kashmir and lived, preached and died in the valley and is buried in the Khanyar quarter in Srinagar.[26]

Mulla Nadiri, the first Muslim historian of Kashmir, who wrote in Persian, says that during the reign of Raja Gopadatta (49–109 A.D.) Hazrat Yuz Asaph having come from the Holy Land to the holy valley proclaimed his prophethood. It was during this time that Sulaiman, a Persian, was deputed to repair the cracks in the tomb of the temple of Shankrachrya on Takht-i-Sulaiman (Throne of Solomon), the peak of a

25. Bhavishya Maha Purana, *Bombay*, 1959, pp. 465–6, verses 17–32.

26. *Mysteries of Kashmir* by Mohammed Yasin, Oxford. Printcraft, India, New Delhi, pp. 12–13.

mountain near Srinagar. Sulaiman, the artisan, inscribed on one of the stones of the flank wall, enclosing the stairs: In these times Yuz Aseph proclaimed prophethood. On the other stones of the stairs he inscribed that Yus Aseph was Yusu, Prophet of the Bani Israel. Mulla Nadiri further mentions that he saw in a book of Hindus that this prophet was really Hazrat Isa Ruhullah (the Spirit of God). He had also assumed the name of Yuz Aseph.

He spent his life in this valley. After his death he was laid to rest in Mohalla Anzmarah, Khanyar (Tarikh-i-Kashmir, folio 69).[27]

These inscriptions are still visible though in a mutilated condition. They were intact and had not been obliterated when Khwaja Haider Malik Chadura wrote his Tarikh-i-Kashmir during the reign of Jahangir (Tarikh-i-Kashmir, folios 11, 12, 56; also Tarikh-i-Kashmir III, folio 25(b) by Peerzada Ghulam Hasan).[28,29]

On the back cover of *Where Did Jesus Die?* there is reproduced a photograph of the tomb of Yuz Asaph and below it is printed the following explanation:

According to the oral and written evidence of distinguished people in Srinagar, the occupant of the above tomb is a Prophet, Yuz Asaph by name, who came to Kashmir some 1900 years ago and was also called Prince. The author of the Tarikh-i-Azami of Kashmir, a historical work written some 200 years ago, refers to this tomb as follows:

The tomb next to that of Sayyed Nasr ud Din is generally known as that of a prophet who was sent to the inhabitants of Kashmir and the place is known as the shrine of a prophet. He was a Prince who came to Kashmir from a foreign land. He was perfect in piety, righteousness and devotion. He was made a

27. ibid., pp. 13–14. 28. ibid., pp. 14–15.

29. Shams, J. D., *Where Did Jesus Die?* Rabwah, Pakistan.

prophet by God and was engaged in preaching to the Kashmiries. His name was Yus Asaph (p. 82).

Yus Asaph in Hebrew means Jesus, the Gatherer.

Thus there is left no room for doubt that after the event of the crucifixion Jesus left Judaea, and, having spent some time in Damascus, set out on his journey eastwards to the lands where the lost tribes of Israel were then settled. His journey took him to Mesopotamia, Iran, Afghanistan, India, Tibet and Kashmir. He finally settled in Kashmir which is a plateau flowing with springs as indicated in the Quran (23:51) and is reputed to have lived to an advanced age. He died in the valley of Kashmir and was buried in the Khanyar quarter of Srinagar. His tomb is referred to as Rauzabal, meaning The Honoured Tomb.

He found acceptance in the lands in which the lost tribes of Israel were settled, and it is a very significant historical fact that while only a few of the descendants of the Jews in Judaea, who rejected him, accepted the Holy Prophet of Islam in whose advent the prophecy of Moses in Deut. 18:18 was fulfilled, the descendants of the lost tribes of Israel in the lands of the diaspora all accepted the Holy Prophet of Islam and became Muslims.

This was a striking fulfilment of the warning that Jesus had conveyed to the Jews of Judaea that if they rejected him the kingdom of God would be taken from them and would be transferred to another people. The Jews of the diaspora who accepted him did not become subject to the penalty imposed upon the Jews of Judaea who had rejected Jesus, and their descendants continued to enjoy the bounties of the Kingdom of God. Many of them became rulers in their own lands and all of them in due time were admitted to the spiritual bounties of the kingdom of God when they accepted the Prophet of Islam.

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